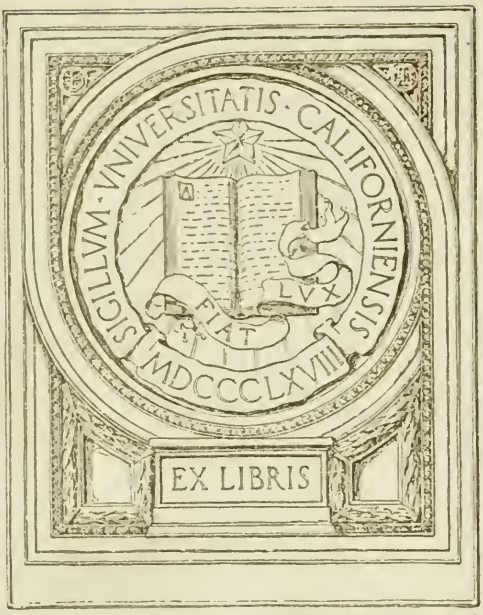
A MOTLEY CREW

MRS. G. W. STEEVENS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A MOTLEY CREW

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A MOTLEY CREW

REMINISCENCES, OBSERVATIONS

AND ATTEMPTS AT PLAY-WRITING

By Mrs. G. W. STEEVENS

LONDON: GRANT RICHARDS

HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN

1901

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I ONLY publish this Motley Crew because it was the wish of one whose word to me was —and is—law that it should be done.

Should any part of the volume attain any measure of success, it would encourage me to go on, so let the critic and public beware.

CHRISTINA STEEVENS.

MERTON ABBEY, SURREY.

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A SKETCH IN FIVE PHASES

PHASE THE FIRST

She never cared about him, but then she cared about no one else, except her own people and her father's house. She adored her father, who was a weak, unlucky, but adorable man, full of wit and humour and kindliness—unembittered by failure, unelated by success.

So she married her lover—for he was good-natured enough, and fond of her in his aimless, limp way. A country gentleman of large property, and beautiful to look at—a credit to any one to go about with. But, oh! so weak, so self-indulgent, so soulless, so hopelessly, so ineffably dull.

She was as bright as possible,—not pretty, but full of charm and *chien* and innocence all tumbled up together.

She thought how nice it would be to have a jolly home for the boys to come to, and a place of happy rest for the ruined father. It

seemed just the best thing to do all round, and so she did it; for she had great confidence in her own judgment, and a certain sort of wish and determination to act wisely and without self-consideration at all times.

Well! Twenty-four hours after the marriage she began to feel what she had done. She had no one to talk to, nothing to do. She came of a bright, clever, active, merry family, and the quiet was awful. No jokes. No laughter. He understood nothing she thought, very little she said—in fact, she was bored to death.

It was better for a while when they got home, for then she was among her friends and her kindred again, and the new life and interest that surround a young married girl closed her eyes for a time.

I think she never felt like a girl again after she first saw him drunk. That shut the door on her youth, and filled her with a bitter sense of disgrace and humiliation that never left her.

It grew and grew and ate into her soul. Her tremendous spirits and good health, with her keen capacity for enjoyment, however,

concealed well the mine that was always ready to explode—the fox that was gnawing at her heart; and no human being guessed that the merry, laughing, amusing girl—the life and soul of every social gathering—was rapidly changing into a reckless, callous woman, chafing under the bondage that she felt was killing all that was good in her, and making impossible the fulfilment of all that she had longed and hoped to do with her life.

PHASE THE SECOND

Then came the baby, and brought with it the torrent of love that had been latent and unsuspected, — passionate, uncompromising love for the fine, healthy, commonplace child, growing stronger every day, till all disappointment, all sense of want, was lost or forgotten in the overwhelming enjoyment of the fulness of this love. His wants and wishes of all kinds filled every moment of her life, absorbed her thoughts, blinded her to every deficiency and to every other duty, and left no blanks—for every aching void was filled.

Of course, as he grew older he occupied

her more and more, as it became more and more possible to have him constantly with her. He slept in her room, and was rarely an hour away from her.

There was nothing particularly engaging about the child. He was a good, strong, upright, steady boy—certainly for the first ten years of his life thinking his mother the most perfect creature in the world, enjoying her high spirits and her energy, confident in her love of him, and in his power to do just as he liked with the imperious, self-reliant little woman, of whom other people stood rather in awe.

She had long ceased to be anything but housekeeper and caretaker to her husband, and he just sank into a lazy, animal, self-indulgent life—good-tempered, or rather easy-going, as long as no one interfered with him; but violent and insolent if she or any one else attempted to remonstrate with him.

He always spoke kindly to little Frank when he saw him, but certainly never gave himself either trouble or anxiety about him, and was only cross and irritable if he were ill or in any way disturbed the arrangements of

the house. Still, I think, down in his heart there was a jealousy of her passionate adoration of, and absorption in, the child.

So passed away ten years, till the time came for the boy to go to school.

She never hesitated where his good was concerned, and he was sent off—she smiling to the last. But, oh! that long, lonely night, as she lay and thought of the small and great anxieties this separation meant. Was he warm? No one had kissed him good-night. Was he happy? Would he love her as much when he came home? One thing was certain—it would never be quite the same again. God only knows what she suffered that night—ay, and many a night after! I fancy she got restless alone without the boy, and her contempt for her husband and his habits and associates made the home life almost unbearable.

Her father had died; the brothers had drifted off into houses and interests of their own. She was not happy in the choice of her friends at that time, and she read exciting novels, both French and English; but had no fixed habits—did and read nothing to develop

the good side of what might have been a noble character. The dreams of a useful life had certainly passed away, and she just lived to kill the time till Frank's holidays came round. Her whole nature was hardening and deteriorating with a rapidity which perhaps any one who only saw the respectable, everyday, outside life of her home would have thought impossible.

Well, the holidays came, and with them the bright, sunny-faced schoolboy, exuberant in his delight at being at home again; shouting with pride and joy at the bigger pony provided for him by her loving care; fondling the dog; shaking hands with the butler and gamekeeper, and all the men-servants, but very 'standoffish' with the women, for fear they should kiss him as they used to do; but glad, oh! very glad, to be cuddled and kissed by the proud and happy mother when they were quite alone. She put him to bed, 'just like a little chap, you know, mummie dear.'

Those first holidays were glorious—not a drawback, except every now and then the anxiety to get him up to bed before his father

came in, or to get him out of the way, lest he should see or suspect the shame and sorrow of her life and of his home. It was a happy time, however, in spite of this; but, oh! how short. Then came the wrench of parting again, and the boy went back to school, taking all her softness and sunlight with him, and leaving only coldness, loneliness, bitterness, and the growing callousness behind.

PHASE THE THIRD

Of course as the boy grew older it became impossible to conceal from him the state of things at home. He said little—very little even to his mother—nothing to any one else; but he became quieter, and went more readily away from home to stay with friends. One day she said to him: 'Frank, you might ask any one you like to stay here or come for the shooting; indeed I think you ought to ask those with whom you have been staying.'

'No, mummie; I can't do that. I can't have fellows staying here, you know: it wouldn't do.'

She turned as white and cold as marble,

and not a word more was said; but that night the last remnant of softness left her heart for ever, and she cried aloud bitterly in her lonely chamber: 'Shall he spoil and darken my boy's life too, as he has darkened mine! Now God forbid. If God there be, where would His justice be in this?'

From that time, I think, the idea never ceased to recur: 'How different our lives would be if he were not here, dragging us down—shaming my boy before his fellows, taking the brightness out of my darling's face. It shall not be.' She drilled herself to think that her boy's happiness ought to be her first care—her first duty.

The contempt for her husband turned to hatred. She grew to see in him only an obstruction between her boy and happiness, —a shadow over her son's life, a cumberer of the ground—and her heart became as stone towards him.

Little by little, as Frank grew older, he too became contemptuous of his father; and although the good, sturdy boy never spoke of him to any one but with respect, he was certainly anything but affectionate or con-

ciliatory in his behaviour or manner towards him. A mutual constraint and coolness grew up between them—the son in his heart despising and disliking his father; the father guessing but too truly the feelings of the son. She, who observed everything, soon saw how this feeling was growing—how the father, who only avoided Frank when he was sober, looked sullenly and even vindictively at him when he was otherwise; and a terror came into her heart, lest in some shape he should injure the lad, whose presence and demeanour were evidently becoming intolerable to him.

Alas! alas! everything was tending to strengthen the hard bitterness of her heart, and to ripen into action the love and the hate so strangely combined in her passionate, undisciplined nature.

At last one evening the father came home, very late, after much searching for, and anxiety, shared unfortunately by the lad, now fifteen years old. Came home, violent and unaccountable, a sad, degrading spectacle.

All but mother and son were asleep in the house, and there ensued one of those scenes which should never be described, but must

and ought to be left to the imagination of those who do not know, fortunately for themselves. Frank remonstrated, not too respectfully, and in his anger the father said: 'Not one sixpence of my money shall you have. I'll make a will leaving you without a penny, and so teach you who you are really dependent on.' The mother heard the words, and all the fury of her pent-up anger broke forth within her. 'Shall he indeed make my boy miserable in his life to leave him a beggar at his death?' she thought. 'Nay, then, if God will not give him happiness and relief, I will seize them for him,—so shall my son have enjoyment and rest, and our home become like the home of others, where the sun shines, and who fear not daylight.' When the anger died away, she recognised what had really been in her thoughts for years,—the resolution that had been growing slowly but surely for so long,—the wish that had been budding in her heart, but that the heat of this storm and threat had ripened suddenly into blossom, and which bore such deadly fruit.

A few months later the strong man lay sleeping in the vault,—quiet reigned in the

home, and hope sprung again in the mother's heart.

She sat watching for her boy's return from school, and thinking of the free, happy time they would have together. No fear now of asking 'the fellows'—nothing to prevent any in-coming or out-going; nothing to bring a cloud over her bonnie boy's face. 'Truly I have done wisely and well,' she thought; 'now will my son know the true nature of home, a place of peace.'

PHASE THE FOURTH

Did it all come to pass just as she expected and planned? I fancy not. True, the boy returned, but instead of bringing back with him the sunny face of his childhood, as she hoped and expected, she saw a graver, quieter expression there than had ever been there before. The shadow of Death had passed over him, and not all her love could take it away.

The child had left him and her for ever! It seemed as if the darkness of the sin had left its shadow on the boy who knew nothing

of it, and passed by the woman who had sinned, but whose natural spirits and callousness to all but one rode triumphantly over the cloud, and who seemed and felt just as quiet and calm as though Death had entered their house in his usual masterful way, against the prayers and wishes of the family, instead of being summoned there by her impatient and imperious hand.

The lad was self-reliant and self-willed, kind and respectful to her after his nature, but hardly confidential, more 'grown up' than a boy of sixteen ought to be, and colder and more reserved than most boys are. He always spoke of his father with respect and affection when he spoke of him at all, which was very rarely. He showed himself quite conscious of the fact that he was now master. He took his pleasures for himself,—it was no longer her eager, loving hand that provided them. In fact, he ruled and made his own life. He had passed from her guidance and planning into a world and a life of his own making.

Unconsciously she resented his self-reliance and his independence. He acted so discreetly, so wisely in all things, that there was nothing

to find fault with. But, oh! how sore and disappointed she was.

He did not care about being petted: he was a reserved, manly lad, very much afraid of showing any feelings he had, and I think particularly afraid of showing them to his mother, who was so demonstrative and excitable. He didn't like her high spirits, which were constitutional, and quite unaltered by circumstances. He didn't think they were dignified. Her active step and perfect health aggravated him. He fancied, somehow, that widows ought to be quiet, rather delicate women, who smiled kindly but sadly. He didn't approve of his mother joking and saying smart, bright things, and making people laugh, 'as if nothing had happened.' He disliked her expression of unorthodox or peculiar opinions, and even went so far as to ask her not to express them, 'even if she had the misfortune to feel them.'

But not for a moment did she regret what she had done. On the contrary, she felt sometimes how wisely she had acted in putting power in the hands of this able, right-thinking young man.

It is not difficult to understand how two such opposite natures should drift further and further apart. Though neither could have told you why, there was no warmth of intercourse between them, and each lived the life they made for themselves. He with his friends, his duties, and his pleasures. His friends shallow, his duties narrow, and his pleasures discreet. She, in her loneliness and disappointment, reading, more wisely than earlier in her life, and philosophically accepting the results of her own act and character.

So the old house was dull and quiet enough, till he brought home a bright, good English girl as his wife,—one of a large, happy, prosperous, commonplace family of boys and girls, who quite accepted Frank as one of themselves, and who laughed him out of his gravity, and chaffed him out of his priggishness, and the old place rang with the noise of innocent, healthy youth.

Frank himself whistled as he went about, and sang again as he used to do when he was a merry little boy, and when the sound of his laughter warmed the cold, aching heart of his lonely, desolate mother.

Only somehow the laughter was hushed and the whistling ceased when she came into the room, or joined the party out of doors. And the silence caused by her presence went like a knife into her heart; and though she never regretted nor repented having lifted the burden from her well-beloved's life, her soul writhed within her as she saw that she only brought cloud and chill where others brought him light and warmth and happiness.

PHASE THE LAST

Alone, always alone. Perhaps in her loneliness growing away from the sin—perhaps her unrepining, unselfish life expiating to a certain degree the fearful crime which in her wrong-headedness and cold-heartedness and self-confidence she had committed.

She soon left the Hall and the young people to themselves; and though a friendly interchange of hospitality was continued between the two houses, it was of a straggling, intermittent kind, and had no real vitality in it. She spent her life in what is called 'active well-doing,' and brought into everything she

undertook considerable talent, perfect unselfishness, and a vast deal of energy.

She lived much alone, but was cheerful and amusing in society, liked by many, feared by some, and respected by all. The people who really loved her were those who were quite dependent on her, and to those in suffering or distress her tenderness was irresistible, and her gentleness and softness complete.

But it was with babies and children that she altered entirely. Her love and sympathy with them was unbounded, her tenderness and patience inexhaustible, and their adoration of her complete. In every baby face she seemed to see the face of her own lost baby, in every sorrow and suffering of theirs the sorrow and suffering that might have been his, and she yearned and struggled for the happiness of the little street children with the same yearning and longing as she had done for his.

Indeed my own impression is that she was full of sympathy with all helplessness and pain of all kinds.

She worshipped happiness as the unattainable, the unknown Good, the thing most to

be striven after—hopeless as the quest of the Holy Grail, but none the less for that, the only end worth working for. And if at times there came into her human heart a doubt or feeling that she had killed the happiness of one fellow-creature by destroying his life, she put it away from her, saying, 'How much better every duty is performed by the living than ever it would have been by the dead.'

In the midst of a life of usefulness, of complete unselfishness, and of the most bitter disappointment—but with no trace of repentance, nor regret for a cruel crime, but believing to the end that this wrong was right—untouched by remorse, respected and loved, she passed quietly and peacefully away.

Mourned and regretted by all who were dependent on her, and who lived in close contact with her—but estranged from the child of her passionate love, and alone, always alone.

CAN A MOTHER FORGET?

In one of the poorest and most overcrowded parts of poor and overcrowded London stands a little whitewashed house, differing from the squalid places round it only in its perfect cleanliness—for on entering, nothing but the plainest and most necessary furnishings are to be found.

One bitter night early in February there sat, in the hardly furnished sitting-room, a young priest. He was evidently expecting some one, and some one he loved; for, from time to time, he stirred the fire and looked with something like a sigh at the meagre meal which was prepared on the table. 'I must not put on coals,' he said to himself: 'for if the fire is really bright when he comes in, he will grudge himself the warmth. I dare not make ready a comfortable meal, for he will grudge himself the food. It is always so, for he thinks that he alone can do without rest, warmth, and comfort; for oh! how

tender and thoughtful he is about every one else!'

As he sat down again, the door opened to admit a tall, powerful man, looking weary beyond words, and wet to the skin. It needed not his clerical dress to assure any who saw him what his calling was; for interesting as his face must have been under any circumstances, it was rendered beautiful by the beauty of holiness, and the strength and sweetness mingled in it made it like the face of an angel.

'Dear brother,' he said, as he came in, 'I can go out no more this night, for my body is so weary and my heart so sore, that I feel helpless and dispirited as I have rarely felt before. The sin and the suffering, the wretchedness and poverty, and, above all, the cry of the children, are breaking my heart. And if mine—O Thou loving Shepherd! what must the suffering be to Thee, in Thy perfect purity and unequalled tenderness? How long, O Lord, how long?'

He sank down on a chair and buried his face in his hands for a few moments, while the younger priest looked at him sadly and

anxiously. It was so unusual for Father Warren's face to be clouded, and so rare for his spirit to be despondent, that he felt sure something was wrong, and that overwork and constant exposure were at last beginning to tell even on his magnificent health and frame. 'Now, dear father,' he said beseechingly, 'do put on dry clothes, and rest this evening, and take a long, quiet sleep; for if you persist in this constant self-forgetfulness, you will have to give up work altogether, and I think no greater trouble could befall you and us than that.'

'Well, truly,' replied Father Warren, 'I am resolved to go out no more this night, for, though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.' He had hardly finished speaking when a ring was heard at the door, and the servant entering said, 'Father, a lady desires to see you, and begs you will not refuse her.'

'Let me go,' said the young priest, jumping up. 'It is too hard this perpetual importunity. I will speak to her, and tell her how unfit you are to do anything more or see any one this evening.'

'Do so, my son,' said Father Warren, 'but

let it be courteously and gently said, as befits those who speak in the name of a gentle and never weary Master.'

The young man crossed himself, and left the room; he returned, however, after a few minutes, with a disappointed and somewhat mortified air.

'She will have none of me, dear father, but desires to see you and you only; and in very truth I feel myself asking for her; her pleading is so touching and her longing so earnest, that I have gone over to her side, and can resist her wish no longer.'

Father Warren rose briskly, and said, 'Do not let her wait a moment longer. I feel to blame that she has waited so long already. Bring her at once, I pray you'; and while the priest hastened to obey, he placed a chair near the fire, and muttering to himself, 'Neither turneth a deaf ear to any poor man,' he put the teapot on the table, and prepared to receive cordially the unexpected visitor.

The door was gently opened by a tall lady, dressed in black. She was exceedingly fair to see, beautiful in feature and carriage beyond most women; but there was an inexpressible

charm far beyond even that,—a dignity and perfection of manner and appearance such as Father Warren had never seen before.

Advancing towards him, she said in a low, clear, and most melodious voice, 'Forgive me, dear father, for disturbing you so late, and on such a night; but no other could fulfil so well the mission which I ask you to undertake. Will you come with me to bring comfort and happiness to a departing and erring soul? and will you bring the Holy Sacrament with you, that, having confessed and been absolved, he may go hence in peace?'

'Dear lady,' answered Father Warren, 'I have not eaten since the morning. My clothes are wet through, and I am very weary. Another priest of God more worthy than I shall go with you,'

'Nay,' she said, looking wistfully at him, 'I pray you, go with me yourself, for to you was I sent, and the time is very short. I beseech you to come with me and make no delay. By the love of the Blessed Mother for her Son, by the love of that Son for all His erring children, I implore you come with me, and come quickly.'

She pleaded so earnestly and tenderly, and yet with something of authority in her tone, that the father yielded; and forgetting all but her anxiety, and that some one had need of him, he hastily put on a cloak and left the house with her.

A strong, biting wind and sharp, sleety rain made walking difficult and conversation almost impossible, so he followed the lady silently as they sped quickly along the narrow streets. Father Warren could not but marvel exceedingly that the lady did not seem to be aware of wind nor rain nor anything round her, but with firm tread and head erect, she walked calmly and quietly though very rapidly on.

She moved as one with a set purpose, while a smile of hope brightened her grave face.

At last, after walking thus for a considerable distance, they came to one of those quiet, old-fashioned squares, once the chosen residence of the wealthiest Londoners, but now deserted for places further from the crowded centre of the huge city.

She stopped at one of the houses, and knocking firmly and decidedly at the door, she turned round to the priest and said, 'I

have shown you the place and told you of the sore need of one who lives there. I can do no more, and must go now. May the blessing of God the Father, the love of God the Son, and the help of God the Spirit go with you now.'

She turned rapidly away and was quickly out of sight, leaving the priest a little bewildered at receiving so solemn a blessing from a lady and a stranger, and yet with the feeling that there was nothing unsuitable nor unbecoming in her giving it.

Before, however, he had time to collect his thoughts or explain to himself what he really felt about it all, the door was opened by a stout, comfortable, respectable servant, who seemed rather astonished at his appearance. 'I have been summoned to a dying-bed,' he said; 'pray take me at once to the room.'

The woman looked perplexed, and answered: 'There ain't no dying-beds here, nor hasn't been this long time. Thanks be to Heaven, we 're all well in this house, sir!'

'There must be some mistake,' replied Father Warren, 'for I was conducted here by a lady who fetched me herself to the

very door, and was in much anxiety and haste.'

'There 's no lady got no right to fetch any one here, and mistake there surely is,' said the woman, rather testily; but looking at the priest, and recognising his holy character, she went on, 'But you had better come in and explain it to the young master—for sure am I he wouldn't like a beggar turned from the door on a cruel night like this, let alone a holy man like you, as is well known to the poor and needy.' So saying, she led the priest into a most comfortable room, where was seated alone a young man evidently waiting for his dinner, preparations for which were on the table before him.

'This reverend gentleman have been led astray, sir, by some visiting lady, and brought out of 'is 'ome, where better he would have been on a night like this, as rampaging the streets to come to a 'ouse where dying-beds there is none, and nothing but health and comfort, the Lord be praised. But I knew as you would not wish him sent away, sir, for the sake of her as is gone, and perhaps you can put him in the way to find the right 'ouse.'

The young man smiled, evidently well accustomed to the ways of his faithful old servant, and, rising courteously, led Father Warren to a seat by the blazing fire. 'Why, you are wet through and through!' he said. 'At least let me take off your cloak, and rest a little, while you tell me how I come to the honour of this visit.'

The father could not withstand the genial greeting, and, sitting down, told the young man how he came there. As he tried to do this, however, he found himself quite at a loss to explain the impression the lady had made on him, and how powerless he felt to resist her importunity, or even to question her as to where she was leading him.

His host was grieved and concerned at the useless fatigue and exposure he had gone through, and said, 'I fear you have, in your ready self-sacrifice, given way too easily to some charitable lady, more zealous than judicious, who, in her desire to do much, has, to-night at least, done too much, and made a mistake in an address which we can neither of us now rectify.'

Father Warren shook his head sadly, for he

felt how completely he had failed to represent truly his calm and dignified visitor, and he sighed as he thought how, after all, her mission had failed.

'I shall not let you go out again till you are thoroughly warm and fed,' said the young man; 'and you must just console yourself by the thought of the kindness you are doing in sharing my lonely dinner, and in giving me the pleasure of your company on such a dismal night as this.'

The worn-out, hungry man yielded to the cordiality and heartiness of the bright youth's manner, and soon they were together as though they were old friends. They seemed drawn towards each other in some mysterious way, and their hearts were opened, and they spoke as neither had done for years.

'I once belonged to your Church,' said the lad in rather sad, regretful tones; 'but I belong to no Church now. Since my dear mother died, nothing seems of real interest, and I feel that if she were indeed living in any state, she would find some way to communicate with me, for heaven itself could bring no joy to her if I were shut outside.

And indeed it is much the same with me, for I have tried every kind of life to forget my loneliness, but everything becomes dreariness without her, and I have found no one to fill her place.'

'Nay, not so, dear boy,' said Father Warren, very gently, 'you have not tried everything—not faith and patience and perfect submission, with forgetfulness of self, the only things that can bring you peace and content.'

'I do not want peace,' replied the boy—for he was little more in his impetuous, loving heart—'I want happiness, I want my mother, I want my old full life back again. It cannot be true that she is living anywhere, in any condition, and has forgotten her only child, her boy, her companion, and her friend. My father died suddenly of heart disease before I was born, and my mother and I were all in all to each other; we had not a thought apart. No! she is dead indeed! gone for ever! Dust and ashes! and the sooner I am the same, the sooner will the aching of my heart be stopped, and a useless life be over!'

Father Warren was deeply moved by the passionate outcry and evident sincerity of the

lad's grief. His mother had been dead for three years, and he had not allowed anything to be touched or altered in the old house. He could not bear any change in her arrangements, and her books and work lay about as if she were still a living presence there.

As they talked together it became evident that the young man had drifted into disbelief of all kinds, and was tossed about on that dreary sea, forlorn and hopeless.

It would not become me to try and repeat the powerful arguments and loving pleadings used by the faithful servant of his Master to win back this lost soul.

The life of the priest was well known to the lad, and he remembered in what terms his mother had always spoken of him; how she had told of rank and wealth put aside by him, that he might the better bring comfort and hope to the poor, neglected people among whom he lived; and his heart burned within him as the holy man pleaded with him more and more strongly to return to the fold he had left, but where his place was always kept ready for him.

'Come back. come back,' he said, 'to the

faith and the Church which made your mother what she was—what she is. It is *you* who, by unbelief and waywardness, have raised the barrier between you. It is you who have closed the door so that her holy angel cannot come to you. Return to the Church of God. Confess your sins and receive absolution, remembering that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just men that need no repentance. Open your ears and your heart now, so that, through my poor lips, you may hear your angel mother pleading with you for your soul's salvation—for another triumph for the blessed Saviour's cross.'

I know not what further words he used, nor dare I venture to describe the feelings of the youth as he listened; but, after a while, his better nature conquered entirely, and kneeling before the priest, he cried, 'Receive me back again, I pray you, and bless me, even me also, O my father!'

Father Warren, however, replied thoughtfully, 'I think it wiser and better, my son, that you should take this solemn step when you are calmer and have fully considered it

with prayer, for surely a second backsliding would be far more grievous than a first. I will leave you now and return again to-morrow.'

'Now, I beseech you, dear father, do not leave me so, unabsolved; but if in your wisdom you think it well that I should reflect further alone, then go into my library and take there the rest you so much need for a few hours, while I remain here and think of all you have said.'

To this Father Warren assented, and passed into the adjoining room, leaving the young man alone.

He looked round him before sitting down, and found in the books, magazines, little works of art, and pictures, further evidences of the refinement and intelligence which had been so marked in everything he had seen in the house. But what arrested his attention most, and fascinated while it startled him, was the picture of a beautiful lady in full evening dress which hung over an old bureau, and beneath which was a vase of white flowers, evidently placed there by some loving hand.

'Where have I seen that face before?' he

thought. 'It seems fresh in my memory, and yet I have seen none such for many years.' He took up a book and sat down before the fire, trying to rest. Tired as he was, he could not sleep, for the picture seemed to haunt and disturb him. Again and again he rose to look at it, till suddenly it flashed across him, 'The lady that brought me here to-night! How like, and yet how different!'

While he was still standing looking, his new friend entered, and said quickly, 'You are looking at the portrait of my mother! It is very like her. Is she not beautiful? Can you not feel now how I must miss her sweet company every hour of the day? Is it not strange that I feel nearer her to-night than I have ever done since she died and left me alone? Indeed I feel now as if she were not really dead—as if we must meet again. Will you receive my confession now, father, and give me absolution before I sleep, and then I think I shall feel as if the black wall between us had been broken down for ever.'

'Willingly, my son,' answered the good priest.

Into that solemn interview and subsequent

conversation it is not for us to intrude, but it was very late before they parted for the night, and it was arranged that they should meet again at the seven o'clock service in the mission-room chapel the following morning.

Imagine then the disappointment of Father Warren when the service began and ended, and his young friend did not appear.

He was very sad. Accustomed as he was to disappointments of this kind, he had never felt one so keenly as this before. He had been so confident of the lad's earnestness, of the strength of his resolve, that he would not give up hope. 'I will go and see him,' he thought, 'before I return home or break my fast. Holy Mother, go with me, I beseech thee!'

He hastened away, and not without some difficulty found the house again. He was not surprised to find the blinds down and no sign of life, for it was not yet eight o'clock. 'Ah! here is the explanation,' he exclaimed cheerfully. 'Unaccustomed to such early hours, both servants and master are still probably asleep,' and he knocked loudly at the door.

It was quickly opened by the same servant as the evening before. But oh! how changed in her appearance. Her eyes were streaming with tears, and she looked ten years older. In a voice broken by sobs she said, 'He is dead. He is gone. Passed away in the night in his sleep; no sound; no cry. The best master that ever lived. He told my husband to call him very early, and when he went to do so, he found him lying calm and quiet, like a marble image.' Father Warren passed by her silently into the room; and there, indeed, he found him lying calm and quiet, and very peaceful, but with such a look of bright happiness on his beautiful young face, as showed plainly that he had felt neither solitude nor fear when the Angel of Death came to fetch him away.

'Who can doubt that it was his mother who came for me last night?' said the priest to himself; 'for can a mother ever forget, even in heaven, the child of her love on earth?'

FELL BY THE WAY

'Woe to the youth whom Fancy gains
Winning from Reason's hand the reins.'

Rokeby

In a commonplace villa, in a commonplace suburb of London, 'within easy reach of the city by bus and tram,' as the advertisements run, lived a commonplace family. The little house was one of a row with a little garden behind and a lesser one in front, comfortable and convenient enough, no doubt, but absolutely devoid of interest as far as any outsider could judge.

A widowed mother with a grown-up son and daughter lived the commonplace life one would expect from their surroundings.

The dead father left a life-insurance for one thousand pounds and no debt nor burden, except his quite unnecessarily expensive funeral, which—honest man—he could hardly pay in advance. His son, in a lower position in the same office as his well-conducted parent, just

took up the position of breadwinner and head of the house, without words of any kind, and life went on just as usual. After the ordinary year of mourning, a little tea-drinking among the narrow circle of friends was resumed, and a little later the young people joined in a dance like their neighbours.

The young clerk was a hard-working, steady fellow, healthy and good-looking and sure to get on. Contented as he was, he did sometimes wonder as he walked home in the evening whether there was nothing more in life and youth to be had than he experienced. It didn't occur to him to go to the theatre unless he took his sister, and then his mother always sat up to let them in; so he felt rather selfish when they went. He had a latch-key, but she sat up all the same.

So the uneventful life drifted on, until one day a new clerk appeared at the office. He was a scion of a noble house, taken in by one of the head partners who was a friend of his father. It was a new element in the old humdrum, respectable office and created quite a sensation. He was very fashionably dressed. 'Quite the swell,' said the other clerks; he talked

all through business hours and made a special pal of our John, who was enormously flattered by his notice and greatly amused by his rattling talk. It opened a new world to him, and he became quite lively himself. They lunched together—not at an A. B. C., as had been John's humble wont, but at Birch's or the Ship and Turtle—and by degrees they became quite intimate; a little longer and the young sprig of nobility was calling all the others in the office 'bounders,' etc.; and John didn't say a word; a little longer—and John agreed with him.

But the real change came when he invited John to dine with him at his club and go to a music hall, and after 'have a lark somewhere.' With some trepidation, John told them at home of the invitation to dinner, but nothing about the after part of the programme.

'Who is the young man, my dear?' asked the prim and careful mother.

'Oh, he is quite a gentleman and such a good chap,' replied John fearlessly, 'he is a son of Lord Monaghan.'

'A lord's son, my dear! Where did you meet company like that?'

'He 's in our office,' said John, getting more and more confident as he saw the impression he was making on his simple audience. 'He 's a long way below me though.'

'Go, by all means,' said his mother; 'and remember you are twenty-two, and ought to try and help those who are under you in the office.'

The poor dear woman swelled with pride as she thought of a lord's son being under her son anywhere, and his sister went quickly out of the room to put a fresh glaze on his dress shirt.

'Mother, I do wish you wouldn't sit up for me when I go out. It spoils all the fun if I think of you waiting up at home,' said John, now quite bold.

'Very well, my son,' said the old lady; 'but mind you are careful with the matches, and don't drop grease on the carpet.'

'They must grow up some time,' she added to herself, 'and he 's a good lad.'

Triumphantly John set out with his glazed shirt and latch-key, and a sense of manhood and freedom he had never felt before. The dinner was like every other dinner of its kind —but it was a different kind than John was

accustomed to, and champagne, followed by a little brandy, made John a different man. No shyness, no strangeness left—all fun and readiness for anything that might come his way.

Off to a music hall. Capital! capital! Now this was real life. A few songs, a whisky and soda, and he was ready for every one. The 'one' appeared in the shape of a pretty, smart, saucy girl who, with another of the same kind, was also out 'for a lark.' His noble young host soon began to chaff the lively girls, and John did not lag behind. They were a merry, noisy party, full of youth and strength, and a little supper cemented the acquaintance into a friendship. When they parted John had arranged to meet his young lady on Clapham Common on Saturday afternoon after his office and her shop (she said) was closed. The simple lad walked home on air, humming the songs he had heard, and feeling as if all life henceforward was to be merriment and chaff. He told his people how much he had enjoyed himself, but did not say how nor where he had been.

Saturday came, and there she was on the Common, smart and neat and full of chaff as

before. At six John said he must go home to tea.

'What! aren't we going nowhere? Well! I never,' and she turned sulking away.

John was filled with shame and said, 'I shall be awfully proud if you will go anywhere with me.'

'Right you are,' said she; 'let us dine at the Monaca and go on to the Tivoli after.'

John was glad he had his week's salary in his pocket, and off they went. She ordered champagne, and, in fact, the same sort of evening passed over again. She told John she was a shop-girl, and an orphan, and had to find her fun for herself. He asked her if she would walk out with him next day (Sunday). Of course she would. He told her about his mother and sister.

'Why don't your sister keep herself like me?'

'Because she is not so clever, my dear'; and for the first time it seemed to John his sister ought to do something for herself, and this opinion grew quite strong when he reflected that he had spent fifteen shillings of his week's pay in a few hours and nothing

to show for it. When he got home, both mother and sister were sitting up for him—very anxious. John had never stayed out on Saturday or so late without letting them know, and they had asked the Jones' to tea, and young Brown had come in and no word. Oh, it was very awkward altogether! John was cross and irritable, and spoke as he had never spoken before. 'I am not going to be talked to like this. I might be a baby. I don't like the Jones', and Brown is a bounder of the most flagrant kind. I was out with a friend and let that be enough.' His mother was startled by his tone, but she was also silenced. He had indeed grown up.

So there was no more sitting up at home, and the young fellow went his own way. He brought less and less of his salary home, but not a word was said by his women-folk, for he was as kind and gentle as ever, only much oftener away from home—indeed, very few evenings did he come home at all until long after the ladies had gone to bed.

About three months this went on. One day he came in early and in high spirits. 'I've two bits of news for you—I've got a

good rise in the office and I 'm engaged to be married.'

The two dear home women did not know whether to laugh or to cry. At last the mother said, 'I knew it was all right, dear son. I am so glad, so thankful you have found a girl worthy of your love. When shall we see her? Who is she? What is she like? Do we know her well? Question after question was eagerly asked by both women at once. John laughingly answered, 'You don't know her, but you can't help liking her when you do. She is very pretty and lively, and her name is Dolly Price. She is in a mantle shop.'

His mother's face fell at these last words, for if they were not genteel, they were nothing. But she conquered herself and said quickly, 'If she is respectable and makes you happy, what more can we wish? Do, pray, bring her to see us, or shall I go to her?'

'I 'll bring her here one evening. She lives with an aunt; she hasn't any people of her own that I know of,' he replied airily, but as he saw a cloud come over his

mother's face he added, 'and a very good thing too. I don't want to marry a whole family.'

So Dolly Price was brought to the respectable villa, and the respectable inmates were rather startled by some of her ways and words, but she was very good-humoured, and John was evidently very much in love, so all went off well enough.

Next morning he told his mother he was going to be married as soon as possible, and they would 'all live together for a bit.' 'Dolly doesn't mind, I asked her last night,' he went on; 'and as she knows nothing about housekeeping, and likes going out with me, it will be just as well, I think. I dare say we might manage it next week.'

Alas! alas! for the mother and sister who had never thought well of any 'engagement' that didn't last a few years at least!

However, there was nothing to be said. He was master of the house now, and any opposition or even advice would probably only create ill-feeling between them and their much loved boy.

The next day John announced his coming

marriage at the office, and asked his friend 'to see him through it.'

'Of course, I will, but who 's the girl?'

'Why, who should it be but Dolly Price?'

His friend jumped up, and exclaimed 'Dolly Price! Great Scot! You don't mean to say you are going to *marry* Dolly Price.'

'And why not?' said John.

'What do you mean by looking like that?'

'Well! *I* can't be in it. I really can't. A decent chap like you to run a mucker like that! Have you got no people? Or is it a secret job, or what?'

John was bewildered more than offended by his friend's manner. He had never seen him so grave and earnest.

'Is it because she is only a shop-girl?' he asked; 'because if that is why, I think a shop-girl is just as good as an office-clerk, and I 'm sure she is a great deal cleverer than I am.'

'She is certainly that,' replied his candid friend, 'but I wish to God she were "only a shop-girl."'

'What the devil do you mean now?' said John; 'let 's have all you know, now we 're at it.'

'Dear old fellow,' said his friend, 'I 'm awfully sorry you have gone so far and are so hard hit—but you *can't marry* Dolly Price. You 're awfully young and simple, or you would have known long before this that she is a good deal else than a shop-girl.'

John got very white, and he looked much older than he did ten minutes before. His simplicity had fallen from him like a cloak, and he understood a great deal he never knew.

'Are you *sure*, Macfarlane,' he said very slowly, 'but you must be sure, for you are a gentleman, and no one but a cad would speak like that if he weren't *sure*.'

'I wish I wasn't sure for your sake,' said Macfarlane kindly, 'but just come round the halls to-night, and I 'll let you find her at one of 'em, that is, if she is not going somewhere with you.'

'No,' said John quietly. 'I wanted to be at home with my mother to-night, and I told her so, but I must go with you now as you say. Don't speak to me any more to-day, like a good fellow.'

The poor lad turned round to his desk, and

did his work as usual. Macfarlane asked him to dine with him, but he refused. 'I 'm rather sick all round, but I 'll meet you anywhere you say in the evening.'

So they met, and they saw her laughing and chaffing as usual, and John said, 'Good-night, old man, don't let us talk of this again.'

They parted at the door without any more words. They were Englishmen, and had no idea of showing their feelings.

Home went John, quiet but determined, and wrote Dolly a letter—it was straightforward and manly, and he begged her not to answer it. But, of course, she did. She denied nothing, made no excuses, but said she would have been a good wife to him all the same—at least she thought she would; for she really loved him, and did so want to be respectable, and the only way to be respectable was to get married. Wouldn't he forgive her and just marry her, and see how it turned out?—'Yr. loving Dolly.'

But John's up-bringing was too strong within him, and while he still loved the girl who had brought brightness into his grey life, he knew it wouldn't do, and so he wrote

begging her not to write again, and not to ask him to see her, for he loved her too much to withstand *that* temptation.

She wrote again and again, but he was firm and true, and never answered. He always came home now straight from the office, but he looked much older, and was very quiet. His mother got really anxious, her one attempt to console him, he silenced at once—'Let me alone, it won't bear talking about.'

One evening he came back to find a black-edged letter waiting for him. It contained a photograph of Dolly lying dead on her bed, and underneath was written—'For love of you.'

So she was dead! Dead for love of him! And he had scorned her and cast her aside as not fit to live with him and his people! God forgive him! He said nothing about the letter, but refusing any dinner, kissed his mother and sister—a rare thing in that undemonstrative family—went out for a walk, and they heard him go upstairs. He did not come down to breakfast, and his sister going to rouse him lest he should be late for the office found him lying dead. He had poisoned himself.

And what of Dolly?

She really loved John after her volatile fashion and she was tired of loafing round the shop, and thought a comfortable home and a pliant husband and no work were very desirable things, and as she could not coax him back in the usual way, she thought it very clever to be photographed as if she were dead and send it to him. She made sure it 'would bring him round to her.' She meant no harm. It was her trump card and she played it. It took the trick but she lost that game.

When I saw her she said she 'was awfully sorry it had turned out so badly. She only wanted to make him come and see her and she thought that would fetch him. I 'd have gone to see him like a shot.' He 'd have looked lovely lying on his bed and his hands folded on a cross of flowers, he 'd have been a beautiful sight. I looked very well myself when I was being photo'ed that way.'

She is quite cheerful, and has begun a new game which she looks very like winning.

SKETCHES FROM LIFE

I

We knew him very well by sight before we ever spoke to him. He came regularly to our workmen's dinners. We were struck by his grave, quiet ways, and he seemed to have no 'pals.' He was a great, big, handsome man, the type of a well-conditioned working man, but very reserved and never 'chaffed' or laughed like the others did, in a friendly, open way, but he was uniformly civil and grateful for the comfort of the place, though there was no charity in it, more than giving our time to the management, if that can be called charity. There was a day nursery upstairs, part of the institution, and about half-past one the little ones used to go out for their walk, or to school, according to age. He was later than usual one day, and happened to see them in the yard, packing into their goat-chaises and

perambulators. He stopped suddenly, and his whole look changed.

He came up to me and said, 'Who minds those children?'

'I do,' I said, 'during the day, and they go home to sleep when their fathers or mothers come back from work.'

He said no more, and went away. Some time after I was playing with the children in the big dining-room downstairs, and making so much noise that we did not hear any one come into the anteroom, which was dark and quiet. We generally got rather noisy and uproarious after tea, when the school-goers had come back, and wanted a romp after sitting still so much of the day, so we came downstairs, and left the girls to begin their cleaning of the nursery. At seven o'clock I was obliged to quiet down my little folk before they were fetched, so we began singing, ending up with a baby evening hymn before handing them over to the elder brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, who had come to fetch them.

I was passing back through the dark, silent anteroom, when I heard a passionate sobbing,

which seemed to shake the room, though there was little noise. I was somewhat alarmed, and turned on the gas quickly. With his arms crossed on the table and his head bowed on them was my big, reserved friend, 'Tom,' utterly broken down, and crying like a passionate schoolboy. No woman could stand that; and I put my hand on his shoulder.

'What is it, Tom? what has happened? and why are you here? You seem in sore trouble.'

'Trouble!' he broke out. 'O my God, there never was trouble like it. You wouldn't understand if I told you, and it would do no good. I 'm done for all round.'

'I would try to understand, Tom,' I said, 'and I dare say I should, for I 've had hard times myself. But don't speak, if you would rather not. Only sometimes it 's a relief.'

'They should 'a let me drown myself and them poor kids; it would 'a been a deal better for us all; but they hauled us out and took us to the workhouse, and the kids are there now, I pays for them, and I live in a lodging-house, and they are miserable, lonely

little creatures, and I 'm a drunkard and all along of 'er and 'im. God damn them and make 'em suffer as we 've suffered. No, no, not 'er, she couldn't bear it. Oh, no. God keep her punishment from her. I 'll take it for 'er. When I gets mortal bad, I 'opes, p'r'aps, I 'm bearing her punishment too, and that 's a thing *he 'll* never do, curse him.'

He was talking quickly enough now, and was terribly excited, and I thought he must have been drinking.

'I ain't drunk,' he said; 'I knew you wouldn't understand.'

I was very ashamed and sorry, and put my hand on his arm again, and he went on, 'I ain't spoke of it to no one—not a living soul. It 's three years since, and I never said a word agin either of 'em; but I suppose it was those little 'uns singing and laughing as broke me down. I often comes and sits here of an evening when the children are playing, and it makes me think of my own.'

'But why don't you have your own children at home with you?' I said.

''Ome,' he said bitterly, 'where 's my 'ome? I ain't got none. I 'ad one once; like a picter

it was. There was her and me and the two little 'uns, and my brother he lodged with us, and we was respectable and comfortable. Regular work and lots of it. I never shifted for fifteen years. Well, one Saturday I came home and the place was empty. "They might 'a waited for me," I says to myself; "but they 'll soon be back, and, it being a fine day, p'r'aps she hurried out with the kids." There was no more fine days for me after that, for she never come back, and my brother never come back neither, and the poor little ones come in at tea-time all dirt and mess, and crying for "mammie," and cried theirselves to sleep. What could I do for 'em? I could do nothing for myself. I went out and drunk till the week's wages was done. Anything was better than sitting alone thinking. I never went back to work no more at the old shop. I couldn't face my mates. How could I? The 'ome was sold bit by bit, the children was a disgrace to be seen, and when there was nothing left I took 'em out and thought we would end it altogether. But they wouldn't let us, more 's the pity. We 're a lot o' good, we are, to any one.'

'How old are you?' I said.

'About thirty-five, I suppose,' he answered.

After a pause he rose to go.

'Good-night, missis,' he said. 'I dunno why I said it all to you. It was the children goin' 'ome upset me, I suppose. Mine 'aven't got no 'ome to go to, poor little things. It 's very 'ard on them, and no fault of theirs, neither. I 've been a fool and a coward, both, I think now sometimes; but I was so 'ard 'it. I was bowled right over, and I 've never rose since.'

'But you are quite young and strong, you might rise now,' I said. 'I think it is cruel of you to leave those children in the workhouse, and you able to work for them.'

He turned quickly round.

'Do you think I could start again, like as if she had died?'—a sort of hope in his voice.

And so we made out our plan together. He went off at once to give notice for the removal of his children, and next day brought them back to me. They came to the nursery all day, and he fetched them in the evening, when his work was done. It was a sort of

adoration between father and daughter, but, I must confess, the house was rather a muddle, for he was in a perpetual sort of self-abasement before the children, feeling how he had wronged them, and they did just as they liked, which answered very well with the little girl, who was anxious to do right and learn to do things about the house, but the boy was self-willed and untruthful, and could not stand spoiling. However, the father was quite happy, and the children well, and 'Gertie' growing more useful every day, when one evening 'Tom' came to see me, and told me he thought he must have a woman 'to mind the house a bit.' I quite agreed.

'I know a nice young woman as would be glad to marry me,' he said, 'and I can't afford to pay a woman and keep her as well out of a pound a week.'

I felt how true this was, but there was a past to reckon with, and I said as kindly as I could, 'I don't quite see how you *can* marry her.'

'She's willing enough to chance it,' he answered promptly, 'and they'll never come forward to make a row, for he's working at

the old place, and taking two pounds a week, and only one child. It ain't likely she'll want to come back to me, and they took every penny we had saved when they went and left me—a tidy sum it was too—so I don't reckon as *he* would care to go near police nor courts of no kind.'

I was much disturbed. The superior housemaid, who was evidently much in love with the fine, handsome workman, was anxious for matrimony, though she knew it would not be legal, and so long as she knew all the truth I felt I must stand aloof and let them take their own way, which they were sure to do in any case. So they were married at a registry office; but a workman's home and two ready-made, spoilt children to wait on, and a breakfast to get ready at six in the morning is a different life from that of an upper housemaid in a gentleman's house with all its luxuries and good living. The poor woman was what the Scotch call 'feckless' and out of place. The children did not like her, the boy was rude and disobedient; and she dare not reprove them, for the father would not hear a word against them, nor allow her to punish

them in any way. She went on adoring him, but was horribly jealous of the children. The poor woman had babies too, but they were nothing to him compared to the two 'who had no mother,' as he always excused himself by saying. She was a bad manager, too, and the home was dirty and uncomfortable. She lost her spirits and her health. Her children were sickly and numerous, and it was altogether miserable. He had a violent, hasty temper at best and began to drink again. I was told by the neighbours he beat her, and indeed the state of the house was an excuse for much. The eldest nice girl has gone to service, and the boy is still at school. It never occurs to the woman to leave him, though she knows as well as I do that he has no claim on her. She could go to-morrow and leave him with all those sickly little creatures on his hands; but what would become of her? She is too broken down to be a servant again, or anything else, I think. No; they must just peg on together to the end now.

II

She was the daughter of a farm bailiff in the south of Scotland—or as they are called there 'a grieve.' He had been a ploughman, and was promoted to his present situation on account of his unfailing rectitude and a certain superiority about him. His wife had been maid in the same family up to the time of her marriage, and was regarded by them with much esteem and affection. They were capital examples of proud, independent Scotch working people, and it was no wonder that when Mrs. A. recommended their eldest daughter as maid to her friend Mrs. B., she should speak of her in the highest terms, and say how fit she was to be companion as well as nurse and maid to her poor young daughter whose spinal affection made her absolutely dependent on her attendant. The girl herself, Jeanie, was as pretty as any one could wish. The chestnut, wavy hair and Scotch blue eyes were really beautiful, and she was as 'guid as she was bonnie,' and became very dear to all the B. family. But in such a situation there

are apt to be complications. She was the constant companion of the suffering Alice; but she was her maid, and also the companion, in a measure, of the other servants. Alice had two brothers: the elder, a fine young fellow, full of kindness and affection, with more heart than head, always a little *gêné* in a sick-room, and who, never knowing what to talk about to 'poor Alice,' saw her for a few minutes every day, and that was all. The younger, Reginald, was different; he was not the heir with his future ready-made for him, but he knew he had his own way to make in the world, and determined to make it. He was sent to Oxford, and it was on his return home after his first term there that he found Jeanie established in the household. He was so much with Alice that he naturally saw a good deal of Jeanie, and the result was natural enough, too.

But it was not during the first vacation, nor the second, nor even the third, that any one really knew what was going on. Nevertheless, the progress was slow and sure. Stronger and stronger grew the love between these two strong, quiet natures. Jeanie was being

educated by living her real life with these educated people, reading with the sister the books advised by the clever, loving brother, and writing the letters dictated by the poor suffering girl, unable now to write herself. Natural as it all was, the recognition of it came as a surprise to the two most nearly concerned, and as a terrible blow to every one else. It happened in this wise. The astute old Scotch father felt some change in Jeanie when she went home for her annual visit. So one evening he spoke with authority to his gentle, submissive wife.

'Jeanie 'ull just bide at hame when she comes back next month. She 's gettin' a fine leddy and I canna bide it in a bairn o' mine. Ye 're a bit auld yersel' now, and she can mind the cow and the swine. Ye can let Mrs. B. and Jeanie ken my wull aboot this.'

'Oh, gudeman,' said the mother, 'Jeanie 's a fine reader and guid wi' her needle, but it 's no' for the like o' her to tend kye and swine. She couldna dae it ava'.'

'She 'll be to try it,' he replied doggedly. 'What sort of a decent man will she get, d'ye think, gin she canna mind kye and swine?

There 's nae lassie o' mine gaun' to marry a wastrel, wi' just a bit hoose and naething else to gie her. Just let Mrs. B. and Jeanie ken my wull the nicht.'

So the letters went. Down in the bottom of her heart Mrs. B. was not sorry. Jeanie had become prettier and prettier every day. Reginald had spent nearly all his last vacation in Alice's rooms. Jeanie was always there. She was anxious about it.

'If anything were to happen to that dear girl in our house I don't know what I should do,' she said to her husband.

Not for a moment did it occur to either of them what Reginald really felt. How should it? He didn't know himself—yet: not till he came home to find that Jeanie was going away next day, and that the new commonplace maid was already in the house. Jeanie brought in Alice's tea as usual the evening before she left and found Reginald there. In a moment they both recognised the truth of what their feelings to each other really were. They shook hands as usual, but both hands were trembling, and Jeanie's voice trembled too as she said, 'It 's good-bye this

time, not good-night,' but the effort was too much, and she ran out of the room.

He followed, and said, 'We can't part like this, Jeanie; I must speak to you this evening.'

She rushed upstairs to her room, and gave way to her feelings.

'It canna be true; but what else can he mean? He a gentleman and me just a servant. It canna be. But, oh, my God! how ever will I wun through life without seeing him again?'

Neither into his nor into her mind did a dishonourable thought or possibility ever enter. They met in the evening. Next morning she left for Scotland.

Not till she got back to the homely cottage, the large, noisy family, and the simple, uneducated life, did she really feel what was before her. Not till she had been some days away did Reginald feel what she had become to him, and how dull and vacant his home now was. He said he was going for a walking tour in Scotland. The walk took him straight to Jeanie's door. She was standing there looking listlessly at the grey hills before her. Without a moment's hesitation they were in each

other's arms, but were rudely disturbed by her father, who took Reginald by the arm, saying:

'Ye 're no' blate, my lad, to come here and treat my lass like that on her father's door-step,' and turning to Jeanie, 'Gang in, my lassie, and bide wi' your mither.'

'Father, father,' she cried, 'it 's young Mr. B., it 's Mr. Reginald.'

'Mr. B.!' exclaimed the grieve furiously, 'would ye dishonour my lass in her ain hame, ye young English callant? Think shame o' yersel, to come meandering here like that.'

'Think shame of yourself,' said the astounded Reginald, 'to belittle your own daughter and my love by treating us like that. I 've come like an honest man with an honest purpose, and I will say my say.'

'Come into the hoose,' said the mother, who had heard the talking. 'What for will ye set a' the neebors clatching aboot us, guidman, it 's no' wiselike o' ye.'

In they went. Reginald declared his wish to marry Jeanie when he left college, and told their mutual love. The father listened till he had done speaking, and then said, 'The kite

doesna mate wi' the mavis and an English squire's son is no man for my lassie. I lo'e her o'er weel to let her do it. I think o'er weel o' her to let her gang from her ain hame, where she 's respectit, to be pecked at by your fine leddies and made to think shame o' her ain folk. Why, lad, her ain bairns would maybe think little o' their mither, when they cam to ken what folk she cam' frae. Na, na, Jeanie. Bide wi' us, my ain dear lassie; mind the Word, and "honour your father and mother." Ye 'll wed a gude working-man and be honoured a' your days and live long in the land.'

'I 'll honour my father and mother,' said Jeanie slowly and sadly, 'and while you live I 'll do your will, but I will marry no one but Reginald.'

For five years she lived on at home, doing everything possible for her parents and the younger children, reading all her spare time, believing, hoping. Poor Alice had faded away. Jeanie had been sent for near the end to be with her, and had gone at once. There she heard that Reginald was in America, at a cattle-ranch, doing well. Mrs. B. was kind,

but distant, and she returned home the day after Alice's death. Not a word was spoken about Reginald by her father or mother, and it was all apparently over and done with; but it was the only real part of Jeanie's life, and never left her thoughts. As she sat on the hill with her sewing she always expected, always waited. To her it was no surprise when one afternoon she saw him coming along the road, stouter, stronger, browner, and much older, but when he looked at her, the same as ever. They went down the hill hand-in-hand, and so stood before the stern old Scotsman. He was reading a letter from Reginald's father, asking him to consent to Jeanie's marriage.

'It is breaking his mother's heart,' he wrote, 'being separated from her boy,' and much more to the same effect. It must have cost the old squire a good deal to write it.

'Aweel, aweel,' he said, 'mither, your and my hearts arena o' mickle account, it seems. You maun gang wi' him, Jeanie, if ye will, and I 'll gie ye my blessing, for ye are a guid lassie—but ye maun never come hame again here to set the other bairns abune theirsels and

upset a'thing. If they tak ye, we lose ye! I'se no' blamin' ye, my bonnie lass. Gude kens what ye are to me, and I lo'e ye weel eneuch to gie ye up to a gude man—be he squire or workman; but it 's an awfu' peety for ye baith that ye couldna mate wi' your ain kind, and I misdoot it—I misdoot it sadly.'

They went to the cattle-ranch together; but she was never allowed over her father's threshold again.

III

It was one of the most striking and painful things I ever saw. She lay in a ward full of other people, quite still on her back, known to be quite conscious, but perfectly uninterested in anything that was passing round her. Her face was like a mask, so set and expressionless was it, and gave no indication of what, if anything, was passing in her mind. My cousin was sister of the hospital ward she was in, and called my attention to her. She had come straight from prison to the hospital. Hers was a life sentence commuted to fourteen

years. She was 'in' for child murder—infanticide, for the poor little creature had only lived a few hours. She never spoke voluntarily, and answered in a low, monotonous voice when asked a question. She must have been a handsome woman, but the thick, dull-white skin and the perfect immobility of the face gave her a weird look, as if she were made of stone. She looked about sixty years old, but was thirty-five! She had been perfectly well-conducted in prison, but never expressed a wish to go out, nor wrote to any one. She could neither read nor write. No one had been to see her for twelve years, nor had she received any letters. Before that, a young countryman came several times, but no one else at all. The kindness and tact of sister and nurses took effect by degrees, and she began to answer us more willingly, but always in the same monotonous tone, and with no inflection in her voice. A hurt to her ankle had become so serious as to oblige the foot to be amputated. She accepted the pain and loss of her foot as she accepted everything else, quietly, and with apparent indifference.

At last I ventured to speak of her crime to her.

She answered quite simply, 'He did it; leastways I think it was him, not me; but I 'm not sure for certain. Anyway, he said it was best; we both agreed that, for I should 'a lost my place if they 'd 'a known it, and faither, he wouldn't 'a taken me home, and we didn't want to marry till we had a bit. He was a kind man, was my lad, and he said it was the best way, an' I wanted to get back to my work, I did, afore they 'd miss me.'

'But why doesn't he come and see you now?' I said.

'Oh, he be dead a long while ago. I don't know when, but chaplain he read it to me out of a letter. Faither he be dead too. Chaplain read that out, too, out of another letter. That letter come from my sister's husband. He wrote cruel, I think. The letter said as I had killed faither and disgraced sister, and as I should never hear nor see anything more of any of them, and that it would be a good job if I died where I was. He was right there. But I know as my sister Mary never wrote them cruel words. She was a good sister to

me, she was always, but she married a hard man; hard to her as well as to me.'

All this she said slowly in a monotone, apparently with some difficulty, and as if she were talking to herself, and as if she recalled it all with an effort, like a person speaking in sleep.

'Does it hurt you to speak?' I said.

'No, but I bain't used to it, and talking don't come aisy like.'

She slipped back to her south-country dialect as she spoke.

We were becoming friends, and I ventured one day to ask her what she had been before the tragedy.

She made an effort, and said slowly, 'I worked among the cows.

Her face for the first time brightened—at least, a brightness flickered over it.

'I 've got sixty cows at home,' I said; and now she actually smiled—oh, such a pitiably stiff smile, the poor mouth quite unaccustomed to the exercise.

'Then the cows are not gone, too?' she said. 'That 's a good job, for they be kind beasts, be cows.'

'Do you like cows, then?' I said, trying to continue the only subject that seemed to interest her.

'Oh, yes; but I suppose mine are all dead, too, now; leastways them as I used to mind,' and there was a look of sadness.

It was such a relief to see any expression on that mask of a face that I welcomed even a sad one, and this visit had been a great advance. The tender care of the sister, the cheerful conversation round her, was evidently taking effect, and her humanity was coming back to her. The next time I went she turned her head round towards me, which she had never done before, and spoke more quickly.

'Are the cows all right?' she asked with decided interest.

We talked long and often of the country and its animal life, and gradually her memory came back, and as it did so she lost her stony look and showed a sweet, gentle face and manner. She was always very quiet and unobtrusive, but the strange, weird look wore off, and when she was able to get up she was like an old woman who had seen much sorrow and borne it very patiently. Little by little

her history came out. Her mother she did not remember. Her father was a labourer, and she went early to outdoor work, and became a dairymaid. She met 'him' at the farm where she was servant, and they kept company, honestly purposing to be married when they were 'a bit older.' Then came the tragedy. No doubt they talked it over much together, and no doubt he hoped 'it' would die, and said so; but I think she killed it herself, probably not knowing what she did, only dreading the disgrace, the loss of her place, and the separation from 'him.' Her father would have been good to her, she thought, if it hadn't been for a stepmother, and she *knew* her sister would. But she was 'married respectable to a big farmer, as kept servants himsel',' and he didn't care anyway to have his wife's people about. She couldn't write, and he couldn't write, and father couldn't write, so she heard nothing of them 'after I was took away,' except the letter saying that father and lover were both dead and her sister moved away 'where your disgrace cannot follow her.'

An artificial foot was given to her, and

when she was fit to leave the hospital she was taken to the country. And there the stone face passed away, and as she stood among the cows the first night she burst into a violent passion of crying, the first tears she had shed since she was 'taken.' She went from one to the other, burying her face on their sleek coats and sobbing. She lived with them, fondling them, constantly calling them by names they did not know, names out of a past, till the mists passed away. A room was taken for her, and a hand sewing-machine got for her, and in a very short time she was supporting herself. She made no friends, and any number of people together always disturbed her greatly. I took her to church once, but she couldn't bear it. It unnerved her completely, bringing back the prison and its horror to her, I suppose. I had to take her out, and she went away alone to the field where the cows were, and became her little quiet self again. The pallor never left her face and lips.

One day she came to see me with a stout, buxom, prosperous-looking woman of forty-five in widow's dress.

'It's Mary,' she said quietly. 'She has come to take me home. I knew she would, whenever she got her own way.'

Mary looked like her daughter, and she was in fact her elder sister. She was a dear, good, faithful soul. The hard husband was dead, leaving Mary well off with a good farm, and she had never rested till she traced the poor, broken-down outcast and took her home to live. It was all no one's fault. It is fifteen years since she 'came out' to a strange, altered world, where she knew no one and no one knew her, so it is thirty-five since she was taken from the fields and the cows, and the few that knew and loved her, but who knew no way to help her or keep her spirit alive. Mercifully this could not happen now, I believe; but oh, the pity of it!

IV

They were a large, wealthy family, who had made and succeeded to money till they had bought up half the county. They were all good landlords, and respected and liked by

every one, but they were not high-bred nor distinguished, except as far as money and exceeding respectability are distinguished. They were very clannish in their ways: intermarried a great deal, and were generally suspicious of outsiders entering into their intimacy. They stuck to each other to their utmost ramifications, and upheld each other through thick and thin, though among themselves they were jealous, and easily offended in the extreme.

One of the connection—a rare exception—went into the army, and married a beautiful wife, sister to a brother officer. He retired from the army soon after his marriage, and lived in his own place, with his wife and four children, a happy and contented family. They were different from the rest of the connection in many ways. They went abroad a good deal and had their own friends to stay with them, and, in fact, were more intimate outside than inside the clan—an unpardonable offence, for they of the clan held themselves to be first among men, and could not abide superiority in others. I remember her quite well, a quiet, stately, beautiful woman, adored by her

children, and when I first knew her, the devoted attendant and companion of an invalid husband. For some time they travelled about in search of health for him, and when they were at home lived more and more quietly and by themselves, till he died after a long and tedious illness.

She had very little in common with his relations, and was not popular with them at any time, and after his death she saw very little of them at all. Her two boys went to school, and she found quite enough to do with the management of the estate and superintending the education of her girls. The estate had been left to her for life, and her husband had advised her taking their coachman as manager till the eldest boy was fit to look after things. The arrangement seemed to work admirably, and all was kept in excellent order. But the clan disapproved of it all. The boys going to English schools! The girls with foreign governesses! A woman managing everything! It was not becoming in any way. And 'who was she to set herself up and consult no one?' they would like to know. In fact, the feeling against her was

very bitter, and she could not eat bread in their sight without giving offence.

About four years after her husband's death great excitement was caused in the connection by the elopement of one of the nieces with a young Englishman, whose attentions and proposal had been much disapproved by the head of the house. But the wilful young couple went to Gretna Green—one of the very last couples to make use of that romantic resource—in spite of remonstrance, determined to have their own way, and had just signed their names in the book, when they saw written above their own the names of Eliza Henderson, widow, and William Walker, bachelor, dated two years before! They could not believe their eyes! The proud, reserved aunt, the fine, upsetting English lady, and the ci-devant coachman! It was incredible!

Back home hurried the newly-married young people, feeling quite sure that all displeasure at their own little insignificant elopement would be quite swallowed up in the excitement and indignation at this terrible discovery. They were received just as they expected, they were forgotten in their own news. Instead of

being treated coldly, every one wanted to see and hear them. All had gone well for them. Such a thing to happen in this most respectable family! Needless to say, every one had always suspected something. 'Still waters run deep,' etc. All the platitudes they knew were quoted freely. All the jealousy and venom that had been smouldering in the hearts of the clan against the refined and superior woman who had held herself above and aloof from them found vent. 'A fine lady, indeed!' Poor Henry! He little knew her.' 'Honest man, she fooled him nicely,' and so on, endlessly among themselves. But outside the clan not a word or a sign: they were too proud and reserved for that. For she had married one of THEM—nothing could undo that. There was one exception. Her two brothers, both in Highland regiments, were sent for, and a cruel scene ensued on their arrival. They asked her if it were true that she had married her late husband's coachman. She said, 'Yes.' They told her that her children should be taken from her. She said, 'She thought they wouldn't go.' They bullied her dreadfully, and left the house in a rage.

They could do nothing with her. All the time the children knew nothing of all that was going on; but the boys were coming home, and were sure to hear. The girls were happy and busy at home, and heard no gossip. But it had leaked out in spite of the family silence, and every one was talking about it.

A friend of mine told me of a most pathetic scene at the station, where he had gone to meet an old colonel who was coming to visit him.

'Any news here?' said the colonel cheerily.

'Well, indeed there is, strange to say,' replied my friend. 'That beautiful Mrs. Henderson has married her coachman, been married to him for two years! An awful scandal. The family are wild about it.'

He had hardly finished speaking when a small boy rushed at him and said, 'Whoever you are, you are telling a lie! Mrs. Henderson is my mother, and we are going home for the holidays. I should like to thrash you, but I 'm so small it would be no good trying.'

My friend said he felt more like crying than anything else.

However, things had now come to a climax.

It was her doctor who told me about it all. William Walker had come in every evening to get his orders and go through accounts, and they had been a great deal thrown together, but nothing could explain it, nothing could excuse it. For two years they had lived together as man and wife, no human being suspecting it. Now it had all to be faced. They made up their minds, all of them, without consulting any one. The four children decided to stick by their mother whatever she did, though every effort was made to turn them from her. But the two who had made the wretched mistake resolved to do their best to repair it. The coachman went to Australia, where he had relations. With great difficulty she induced him to take a considerable sum of money, and the doctor I spoke of before saw him off. She sent every possible comfort and luxury with him, every evidence of the tenderest love. The last words he said to the doctor were, 'Tend her well and respect her to the last; there is not another like her in God's world.' She was very ill for some months, at death's door for long. When she recovered they all went abroad, and the place

was let till the eldest boy came of age, when she made the property over to him, and arranged for each of them, as they grew up, in the same way, keeping only a small allowance for herself. Some years ago William Walker paid back the money he had taken out with him through the doctor. When I last heard of them the three eldest children were all well married, and the youngest boy, who must now be well grown up, is a partner in a firm in India. I sometimes catch myself wondering if she will go to Australia, or if she does not know where her husband is, or if he is living, even. For the kindly doctor is dead.

CHARITIES AND CHARITY

I

DISTRICT NURSES

This part of *A Motley Crew* was written at a time when my life brought me into continual contact with the people affected by such things, and my opinions are confirmed, not modified, since they were published in the *Pall Mall Gazette,* whose Editor I have again to thank for permission to re-publish them.

Christina Steevens.

Of all the public charities in this money-giving country, I make bold to say that none has more effectually fulfilled its intention and purpose than the Metropolitan Nursing Association for providing trained nurses for the sick poor in their own homes, affiliated as it now is with the Victoria Jubilee Institute.

On April 14, 1876, Miss Nightingale addressed a letter to the *Times* on behalf of this excellent charity, then just established. No one will accuse her of want of practicality or misdirected enthusiasm; and that twenty years later the scheme should be working on the

same basis is a guarantee of its excellence. In her letter she says, 'They are the servants, and very hard-worked servants, of the poor sick.'

There are now in London several homes for district nurses, but the central home is at 23 Bloomsbury Square. In that home there are to-day fourteen ladies whose lives are given up to this work—a superintendent, three other staff nurses, and ten probationers. A glance at their rules will at once tell something of their work and life. Rule VIII.—'Nurses shall be responsible for the personal cleanliness of each patient under their charge, and for the care and cleanliness of the room. Each nurse shall on every visit see that the rooms, furniture, and utensils of each patient are clean, *or clean them herself.*' Just consider what this means. If you know anything of the courts and slums of London, you will feel what a district nurse has to do. Every case under treatment from her home *must* be seen once a fortnight by the superintendent.

'Don't you find a great difficulty in getting these people to clean the rooms?' said I.

'No,' replied the nurse, 'except just at first. We show them how to do it thoroughly, and

it is wonderful what efforts they make to keep it up.'

'Don't you find the rooms in a filthy condition very often?'

'Yes, that's why they have so much need of cleaning. They are often full of vermin.'

In fact, it is simply this. The nurse finds a pigsty; she leaves a tidy, airy room. Let me take a case. The mother had been two years in bed. The place was a den of foulness. One could cut the air with a knife. The nurse employed two of the little children to collect the foul litter and dirty linen from under the bed and sort it, emptied utensils which had not been emptied for a fortnight (this is common), cleaned the grate, washed the children, combed and cleansed their hair crowded with vermin. Next day, when she came, the eldest girl, aged eight, had cleaned the place, and, perched on a three-legged stool, was trying to wash the dirty linen with her little thin arms. A woman, a neighbour, was found to do this willingly. Every district nurse will tell you the same thing, that the poor are 'ashamed that we should find their homes so dirty again.' A nurse sees all her patients once a day; many

of them twice, and when necessary four or five times. The home supplies sheets, bedclothes, and under garments where needed, but only during the time they are required for the patient.

When the nurse leaves her patient every morning she dusts the room, ventilates it, washes all glasses, utensils, etc. ; disinfects drains, sweeps up the fireplace, fetches fresh water, and fills the kettle. Directly a nurse is sent for to a case, she ascertains what doctor is attending. If none, she at once gets one, for no nurse may treat a case except under a doctor; if no other can be afforded, then the parish doctor must be called in, for this rule is imperative. But though a doctor be in attendance the nurse may possibly never meet him, unless an appointment be thought desirable. In a strong, brown-paper cover is a chart and paper on which the nurse has written her report, which she leaves for the doctor. He in his turn leaves his orders, and so they are kept in constant and direct communication.

'But,' I asked, 'how do you get the necessary soups, wines, and invalid food so important for nursing properly?'

'Oh,' replied my nurse cheerily, 'we never want for these; the district visitors, the clergy, the C.O.S. are all very kind in providing things in sickness, and on a written order from the doctor, we can obtain supplies from the workhouse; and, of course, if we couldn't get it elsewhere, we should get it from the home, but we ourselves must neither give nor receive.'

Now, who and what are the women who devote themselves to this life of helpfulness and love, with all its nastinesses, its exposure, and its discomforts, to eight hours daily of such work as I have described? I cannot do better than quote Miss Nightingale again: 'It requires a higher stamp of woman to do this, to thus combine the servant with the teacher, and with the educated woman who can so command the patient's confidence as to let her do this, than almost any other work.' The more refined the woman, the more useful will her work be. As to the preparation for this work, two years at an approved hospital and six months in a district home is the training required. Then they are ready to be nurses; their salary, thirty pounds a year and everything found. When this training is complete they go

up to the Jubilee Institute, and are appointed either to a town or country district, and are called 'Queen's Nurses.' If appointed to a town district, they live in one of the homes; if to a country district, rooms are taken for them. Before going to the country, the nurse must be a certificated midwife, in addition to her other training; this is not compulsory for town work. Of course, all this is very expensive, but it is very thorough, and secures educated women; and educated and refined women are the only women who will do permanent good in this work. Besides going from house to house, comforting, soothing the sufferers in their wretched homes, they visit the Board Schools, when asked to do so, regularly at the intervals found necessary. The lower the neighbourhood, the oftener they are wanted. By their help ophthalmia—that curse of poor children—has been almost driven out; sore heads are cleaned and dressed; burns, scalds, and wounds of all kinds attended to. Let the teachers in these schools say what a boon and blessing they are to these uncared-for children. If any disease is prevalent they come oftener. Yet the School Board pays them nothing for

this weekly attendance, which seems to me a great omission.

To have a Queen's Nurse in the country, the district requiring her services must guarantee a hundred pounds a year to the Jubilee Institute for nurses; but you know what you are getting, and they provide rooms and everything and pay her salary, so you know what you are paying. We have glanced at the town nurse's work, let us go for a moment with the country nurse. Her first patient is a carter, with a nice wife, who is busy getting her three children off to school. Nurse washes him, makes his bed, and puts him tidy for the day, enters his temperature and pulse on the chart which she leaves for the doctor, ascertains that his wife understands clearly about his diet, writing out a little time-table to remind her. Next patients, more than a mile away, are mother and baby in a lonely cottage. Both husband and wife are dirty and thriftless—so dirty that the neighbours don't care to wait on her. Nurse proceeds to heat water, which she has to fetch herself, and to wash mother, baby, and two little children—with only a small iron pot for all purposes; cleans the room, and

leaves her with a fire made up and food within reach—and so on for hours. In rural districts, the ideal plan would be to have a midwife and a nurse, as the same person ought not, properly, to visit indiscriminately; but this requires a long purse, though I think the permanent improvement in the homes of the labourers would repay the richer part of the community for the outlay. In both town and country there is an enormous proportion of sickness and suffering out of the range of hospital relief that calls loudly for help. It is more painful and trying, because it is hopeless and incurable. Consumption, incurable cancer, ulcerated legs, paralysis, and many other ills abound among the poor. If only every one could and would realise the difference the daily visits of the nurse make in those dreary, painful lives, how they ease the suffering and help the relations, they would, I feel sure, do all in their power to supply the want.

I venture to think, and to say, that if there is any class of public servants who deserve to be well paid and well cared for, it is our district nurses. I believe, too, that their influence for good is incalculable, for a regenerating influ-

ence follows the steps of the tender-hearted, skilful and sympathising nurse. She is the pioneer for good in more directions than one. The sanitary authorities will find their hands strengthened by the practical dealing of the nurse, who will teach the poor to find out what is wrong about the place and how it should be set right. Here is a charity truly national in its benefits.

II

HOSPITALS

I AM not going to plead for hospitals; there is enough of that from all quarters. I approach the great question, in all humility, from quite a different standpoint. I want to call attention to their drawbacks and faults, for their advantages and virtues are evident enough. The sick, the injured, and the dying must always excite compassion; but is that a reason for indiscriminate help, any more than other kinds of suffering? Is help, free help, always to be given to the sick in body without money and without price? Why is such free relief not considered as pauperising—when pauper-

ising is held up as so great a danger in feeding hungry children, giving clothes to the half-naked, etc., and quite rightly so. Sickness and accidents are as certain to come in large families as need of clothes, rent, hunger, and death itself. But even the very poor belong to some burial club, and the more decent to insurance societies of one kind or another; but for the illness which is to make the burial club of any use they make no preparation at all. Why should they? The outdoor patients, the indoor patients at the hospitals, all alike look upon the relief given there as their natural right. I have often known an ill-tempered patient say to a nurse, 'If *we* weren't here, *you* wouldn't be wanted,' and this is the spirit engendered by gratuitous relief, speaking generally, for the gratitude of individuals is exceeding and touching in the extreme. How, then, can the pauperising danger be avoided? A simple way seems to be by enforcing payment according to their means from every person using the hospital who is able to pay at all. The number of such persons will be found to be far larger than any one not acquainted with hospitals

would believe possible. The rate of payment should be decided by an official appointed to this service after personal inquiry into each case, and by him reported to the steward, or a fixed charge according to the status of the patient. This plan would increase to a vast degree the benefit of hospitals, for a great number of better-class people who will not accept charity would gladly accept with true gratitude the advice and assistance of the great and good physicians, surgeons, and nurses whose care and attendance, if given privately, would be quite beyond even a solid small income. By such means this enormous charity would be extended to the really deserving, self-helping people. And when all who could pay had paid, there would still remain over a large number who could pay nothing: the bread-winner struck down in the middle of his work; the mother whose vacant place at home is so badly and expensively filled in her absence, and many other cases.

Then, as to extravagance. The number of small hospitals and special hospitals is perhaps the greatest and most obvious. There are in London above *a hundred* hospitals and dispen-

saries, besides fever hospitals (which are paid for out of the rates), and to only twelve of these are medical schools attached. What a clear saving there would be if all these (except the infectious and workhouse infirmaries and lying-in hospitals) were concentrated, thus reducing the paid officials, such as matrons, stewards, and attendants of all kinds to an enormous degree! The money so largely and willingly subscribed would go much further. The doing away with special hospitals would also be a great advantage to the schools, which must always be regarded as a great part of the benefit of hospital work. Of smaller extravagances there are many. The wasteful use of bandages and appliances is one which all matrons and sisters will agree in finding the utmost difficulty in keeping down. There must always be a certain waste of food, perhaps inevitable to some degree; but it might certainly be diminished by more careful supervision and arrangement. In the older days, when 'broken bread' was more regarded, a rule was established at St. Bartholomew's, that veteran hospital, that at one o'clock daily certain poor families should come to receive

'the broken meats'; this laudable custom is still religiously observed there. If this can be managed at one hospital, why not at others? It is the old story of public subscriptions: easy come, easy go.

This brings me to hospital debts. Nearly every hospital in London, except St. Bartholomew's, and I believe, St. Thomas's, is in debt. What they want they get, and trust to public generosity to pay the piper. In any other establishment this would be considered dishonourable and discreditable, but in hospitals it seems to be received as natural and deserving of pity. If a private person overbuilt himself, because he thought larger rooms and more air were desirable for his family, who would help him out of the scrape or pity him? Hospital after hospital overbuilds itself every day, knowing it cannot pay, but trusting that public feeling will not allow wards to be closed. To procure money any means seems allowable in this cause. There is a thing called 'Hospital Saturday,' which is really one of the most pitiable and painful exhibitions of the time. At the street corners stand or sit young girls and children, dressed up for

the occasion, who shake red and white boxes in the face of every passer-by, laughing and joking, and towards evening adding flirting to their enjoyment. You go to the country—it is the same. At a rural station eleven such boxes were thrust into the carriage where I sat some weeks ago. Is this charity? It is difficult, indeed, to find it under such guise, though perhaps it *is* hidden here and there under the gaudy or fancy dresses, and its gentle voice murmurs even under that noisy and jarring laughter.

But perhaps one of the most serious and painful phases of hospital life is the prolongation of weary and useless—nay, worse than useless—lives. I asked a poor old man, worn out with watching by the bed of his dying old wife, how she was. 'She would 'a died in the night, poor old body, if they 'd 'a let her,' he answered wearily.

Of course they could not let her. I quite acknowledge that. But is it wise, is it right, is it kind to patch up people suffering from incurable consumption and malignant diseases, and send them out again to breed more diseased and weakly children to enfeeble our

people and fill our workhouses and prisons and asylums? How are sound minds to be expected in such unsound bodies? I think such cases ought not to be taken into hospitals at all, except, perhaps, to die there in peace and comfort. It is well known to the merest student that such cases are not curable. Give them ease at the last, but not power to propagate and spread diseases.

I am far from underrating the good of hospitals or hospital work. It is untold in its power and breadth, and is the essence of mercy. What I want is to see their help given to the deserving and their arms stretched to take in a far wider number, to heal where healing is possible; to see them give the use of their wonderful appliances and skill to the lower middle classes who cannot pay for them in their own homes, and who cannot afford to go to the nursing homes, where the charges are necessarily high, and which are such a boon and help to the upper classes.

In Germany, in Hamburg, for instance, of which I speak with knowledge, there are three classes of patients. The highest, or first-class, pay twelve shillings and sixpence a day, which

secures a private room and a special nurse. The second-class is about half that for the room, and the nurse must be shared with one other patient. The third-class must pay a shilling a day, and go into general wards. No one there is free, for if they cannot pay themselves their parish must pay for them, or the sick club to which they belong.

I feel that these are heavy wares for a book like this, and can only be glanced at in this article; but the mouse saved the lion, the spider taught the king, and perhaps these suggestions may attract the attention of wiser people than the writer, and open the eyes of the public to the fact that it is just as desirable to help wisely as well as freely.

The long incurable, hopeless cases, which call for no operation nor specific treatment ought to be cared for in their own homes with the aid of the parish nurses.

Even if every patient in hospital paid, as in Germany, there would be ample room and call for help from the ready and willing giver, but it would be personal help to a special sufferer for whom you would pay weekly, and could send into whichever class the giver

thought most suitable to the circumstances of the patient's home. Mark how this would extend the personal interest in hospitals—how much more vividly their needs and deficiencies would be brought home to the outside public, and instead of diminishing the help given I believe it would largely increase it where it was required without begging, bazaars, and entertainments, and such like; for it would be given by those to whom the need had become personally known, and to those by whom the benefits would be personally appreciated.

III

GIVING OF DOLES

I FEEL that in writing of 'doles' I am opening up a very wide and disputed subject, but in noticing charities at all it is impossible to pass over so dangerous, so harmful, a form of charity as this. Of public, regular doles, in most cases of very old institution, I can find no good to say at all. In very few cases do they reach the persons for whom they were intended; generally, because the class of

person for whom they were intended no longer exists, owing to the entire changes in social conditions that have come about.

When these doles begun, money was of a very different value, and the sum which now only means starvation, and must be eked out by begging, either public or private, to make bare, squalid existence possible, meant then something like a comfortable support. Let me just take one as an example and type of many others similar. It is called the 'Dean's Gift' in Westminster. It has been administered with peculiar care for many years, but the result is to keep 'twenty-five old women on the verge of starvation and in the paths of beggary who ought to be in Fulham Infirmary.' I quote the above from a letter before me, written by one who knows the poor and speaks ably on the subject. These poor creatures would be well and carefully looked after, if they would forego this starvation pittance. This is a typical case, but there are many like it. Surely the Charity Commissioners might deal with this matter, and while abolishing the letter of these ancient doles, might give life to the spirit of them.

Then they would give the help the good old donors intended, instead of doing the harm they would have been the first to deplore. We hear much nowadays of the evil done by private giving. Multiply that evil largely, and you will find the amount of evil done by public doles.

This brings me to the matter of private giving. It is, no doubt, reprehensible to give to beggars in the street, whether they be boldly soliciting alms or pretending to sell little useless wares, which are in most cases only a device to avoid being taken up for begging. To give to such as these is simply to gratify yourself and save trouble; for what sort of use is a penny or twopence? When you give this sort of alms, you simply say dumbly, 'Go on; collect more pennies, and you will soon have enough to get through the day.' Very few people can pass a starved-looked child and not give it something if it begs and looks piteous. Do try and realise what you are doing when you thus give way to self-indulgence by giving pennies in this manner and heedlessly passing on. You are simply degrading that child mind and body;

you are helping to keep it down; you are assisting it to break the law; you are encouraging it to stay away from school, and pushing it a step further on towards the workhouse or the prison. A child brought up to beg will almost inevitably end in one or other of these places. Think well before you encourage it by giving your mite to assist its ruin.

But if you are to think well before you give, you must think better before you turn heartlessly away. Remember the words, 'Neither turneth his ear from any poor man.' Stop and speak with the child, the cripple, or the poor wretched woman. A little talk with any of these will soon show you what you ought to do. If they be willing to take you home with them, or to go to the nearest C.O.S. office with you, then your duty is plain, you must go there with them. You dare not leave them unaided. I know that, in far the majority of cases, you will find them regular, well-known beggars, living by that alone, and unwilling to do anything else. In such cases I believe—hard as it is—your duty is to report them to the nearest policeman. In the

case of a child you may by this means yet save it, for it will be taken before a magistrate, the case thoroughly examined, and probably the child sent to a truant school to be warmed, clothed, fed, and taught, given a fair start in life, and taken away from a hopeless and degrading home. If the family be really in dire distress, you will get immediate relief at the C.O.S., if you are not able to give it yourself, pending further inquiries, in which that helpful society will do all that is required. Then, show them where and how they can be efficiently aided, if, again, you are not able to do it yourself. To take all this trouble, to give to your utmost if the gift will be beneficial, that is true charity.

It must constantly be remembered that these poor people are far more ignorant than is believed. I think they have no idea what to do but 'put away' their things when trouble comes, either through want of work or sickness. If infectious illness, fever, come into their dwelling, it means loss of work at once, even when the sick one is removed directly to the Fever Hospital. The woman cannot take in washing nor go out to work,

and often it is the same with the man. The children cannot attend school, and ruin stares them in the face. 'They should prepare for such occasions.' Oh, yes, so should we all be ready for all emergencies at all times. But are *we* all ready? Do we find it so easy to save? Are *we* never in difficulties through our own carelessness, extravagance, or want of foresight? But we are not utterly bad and worthless for all that. Far from it. Yet from our earliest years *we* were taught the virtue of prudence. Many of us reap the advantage of it in our relations and friends. Who taught these poor people? I am speaking now of the very ignorant. And even if they were taught, are none of *them* to fail sometimes? The wonder to me is how often they persist and pay up their club money as they do till the very end. When Saturday comes, how many things are wanted! After the rent, coals, and clubs are taken out, how little is there left? But the hard fact remains that while the man who gets regular work and is sober gets on well enough in his way, the man who works irregularly, often making far more money than the other, is constantly in want. Take the

porters at markets and small costermongers; they make from year's end to year's end far better money than the regular common labourer. But look at their homes—they ought rather to be called dens, for there is little of home about them. It is always what is called vulgarly 'either a hunger or a burst' with these irregular workers. Just because the work is irregular it must be well paid. I cannot see why they should not be helped over real times of poverty because they failed to provide for them, for they know no better. They have lived from hand to mouth for generations. By helping them kindly and judiciously over a crisis you can easily gain their confidence and respect, and your advice be of great value to them in teaching them the better way.

This brings me to say that private charity is much more helpful to both giver and recipient than public charities. It is more elevating to both, for ignorant people look on public charities as a right, not a free gift. A dear old friend of mine once told me that her mother, a wise and loving woman, had a plan for reforming the relations between rich and

poor which struck me as being full of good sense, if only it could be made general. Let every well-to-do family, whether in town or country, take under their especial care and guidance one, two, or any number of poor families they like, according to their means. Let them help them by advice, in kind, or with money as occasion arises — but always with love and true sympathy. Let the rich children help the poor children, so that each learns to love and trust the other. Let the poor family or families feel that there is always one place where they can go for help of any kind, a place where they are known and trusted, not where they receive a shilling and are done with. The shillings should be given as seldom as possible. Who would be most benefited by such an arrangement? The rich or the poor? I believe the benefit would be very equal. What chance would the Socialist have in such families? 'Utopia,' you say. 'Try for a gown of gold, you 'll aye get the sleeve of it,' I reply.

IV

OF CHARITY AND CHARITIES

HALF the time of the wise is spent in undoing the mischief wrought by the good. It is a true saying proved every day by those who know anything about the people spoken of so freely as 'the poor.'

It will be better to take one subject at a time, and the one brought most in evidence just now is the country holiday mania. I use the word mania after consideration—for it is overdone. There are many country holiday funds. It would be better if there were more or fewer. This sounds paradoxical, but I mean it. Either let every group of schools have a country home for itself, to which its own ailing children can be sent at any time that a change is advisable, or let there be one thoroughly well-managed country holiday fund under some tried head. The present system (or unsystem) constantly breaks down and overlaps, and the parents of the better class do not care to send their children under the present management (or mismanagement)

Before I go further, I must say that going much among the poor in various places and circumstances I have never heard a word of complaint or dissatisfaction with the arrangements of the fund managed by the Hon. Alfred Lyttelton—nothing but praise and gratitude. The children seem to be well looked after while they are away, which is essential and indispensable; they are sent back clean and tidy, and in many cases clothes and boots have been given. The supervision generally appears to be excellent. If this can be done in one case, why is it such a failure in some others?

I have just seen a boy for whom I paid ten shillings for a fortnight. He returned a mass of rags and dirt, and looking really ill. His father came to me about it, and I cross-examined the boy, aged twelve, with the following result. He had never been washed but once, and then only to his knees. He only tasted meat twice —'a bit as long as my finger, and very narrow.' Bread and tea for breakfast, bread and dripping for dinner, and bread and tea for supper. But worst of all, 'We was five of us in one bed—three girls and two boys.' One of the

girls was over twelve. Another boy sent from the same source said he slept on the floor all the time. No one visited these wretched children while they were away. All the money spent on them, as well as on the advertisement and organisation of the fund in question, might much better have been thrown into the sea.

The great good to be got from these country holidays must be moral, for a fortnight will not do much, if any, permanent physical good. It will do physical good if the children are well fed, and come from tolerably comfortable homes; but I do believe it does more harm than good among the very poor, for if the country home be a comfortable one, the change is too sudden for their feeble constitutions, and just as they are beginning to get acclimatised the short fortnight is over, and they come back to their wretched homes to take fever or diphtheria, or at best to face another violent change. All doctors familiar with the poor in their homes will agree with this statement.

The moral advantage cannot be overrated if the country home be well chosen, for the poor blind eyes are opened to an entirely new life,

a quiet, respectable home life undreamed of before in the overcrowded slums of this enormous city. But just here comes in the great difficulty. These respectable homes or cottages will not take in the lowest class of children, and very rightly not. Therefore, I repeat, that the lowest class of children reap little advantage from the country holiday funds as now administered.

But under an experienced head, things might be bettered. There are commons enough near London, where the gipsy camps unmolested. Why should not large, movable houses be put up on several of these by permission of the lord of the manor—with beds of heather in them and a camp fire beside them for cooking and washing purposes—to be filled with these very poor ones? Better still, these houses should be near the sea when possible, and might each accommodate a hundred children between seven and thirteen years old. There are a number of young active women pining to immolate themselves, who would willingly devote three or six weeks to looking after each dwelling, and an able-bodied woman could cook and clean for them.

These houses need only be kept open for six weeks in July and August, and, allowing two sets of children for three weeks each, would supply the want. One house to each school would be enough, and would only be required for the poor neighbourhoods.

For the better class of children whose parents can afford to pay something, and therefore ought to be made to pay, and who will send their children clean, let decent homes be found, such as Mr. Lyttelton provides. If he were relieved of the poorer ones, a great difficulty would be taken out of his way, and he might be persuaded, having proved his efficiency, to arrange for a far larger number. It is not want of funds that would stop any really good scheme. We are a liberal people; once convince the public that a thing is well and judiciously managed, and money will flow in; but cases such as I referred to above turn away many an otherwise cheerful giver. To do these things well and thoroughly, labour of mind and body and constant, never-tiring supervision is required, and these are more difficult to get and to keep up than money.

I have gone so far on the supposition that a

fortnight or three weeks change is very desirable for London children, but I don't feel quite sure about that. I think the delicate ones require much longer to do any good worth doing, and I think the strong ones are in most cases just as well left at home, since back home they must come.

Great and lasting good is to be got from a few years in the country, and where this has been tried in happy circumstances the results have been most satisfactory. In most cases the boy who has lived in the country for two or three years will prefer to stay there: the thought of town becomes hateful to him. What would that mean if done in thousands of cases? It would mean lessening one of the crying evils of the time; it would mean drafting back to the country some of the thousands who have crowded into the town and who fill the streets with 'loafers,' the casual wards with ne'er-do-weels, and the prisons with strong young men for whose idle hands Satan has found mischief.

Now, to do this, charity must step in and aid and transcend charities. For to take these children out of towns to healthy, happy

country homes means love, persistent kindness and thought, and much personal intercourse with them, if it is to prove successful. These things are more difficult to attain than money and far more precious. To many people it is quite easy to subscribe annually to charities, and they are content with doing that. How would it be if every one with a home in the country, great or small, took one, two, or three children, according to their means, to live with them altogether, either boarded with their gardener, coachman, gamekeeper, or in their own kitchen, and attending the parish school? Thus they will fit themselves automatically for the work they must take up later. Let these children come not as outcasts, but as charges—sacred charges. Treat them tenderly as you would your own, and teach your children to do the same and see the result. 'I couldn't undertake such a responsibility,' 'My servants wouldn't like it,' and so on. Quite true: it is full of difficulties; but it would be well worth doing all the same, and it means true charity, love, sense of brotherhood. Let the children, if possible, be the children of widows, or motherless. Of course

they won't all turn out well—but pray, gentle reader, is *every one* of your own family eminently satisfactory? You must expect worries, disappointments, ingratitude; but what is charity for but to bear these things?

Just imagine what it would mean if the thousands and thousands of country homes in England, Scotland, and Ireland would each take one or two children from the overcrowded towns! Would any one scheme draw the masses and the classes nearer to each other? What an economy! No enormous, costly buildings; no votes, no secretaries, no paid officials in this scheme. A child, boy or girl, can be well kept, clothed, schooled, and started in life for from fifteen to twenty pounds a year at the outside. And you have some permanent result for your money. This only means a little trouble, a little responsibility, and a great deal of help to the State. It leaves plenty of room for the well-managed country holiday funds, and would draw country and town together. The sharp little town children would help to brighten up the rather dull rustic brains, and raise the country school standard, while the rural children would show the town children

many ways to increase their stunted growth and develop their unused muscles.

This is no Utopian scheme. I have seen it tried by several people, and I speak with authority, and not as the Scribes.

V

FOOD

Of the many badly-managed and injudicious charities in London, perhaps 'free meals' is one of the worst managed and most injudicious. I will, I feel sure, be set down as hard-hearted, selfish, and inconsiderate, when I say at once plainly that I think there should be no 'free meals' at all; for I believe that the indiscriminate free feeding of children and vagrants has done more to increase pauperism and idleness than any other single so-called charity. It is terrible to think what enormous sums are given yearly in London only to this cause, and then to reflect what harm it does to the people. It is a cry that 'takes.' No heart so hard that it can resist the plea of starving children—except the hearts of the

parents of those children. And how often are they really starving? I know a good deal of three of the poorest parts of London, I am intimate with the home lives of the people, and I have never met with a starving family. Oh, yes. I have met with starving children, and, in one or two cases, with starving women. But the parents of these children can find money for drink, and in every case that I have thoroughly sifted I have found that one or other parent is a drunkard, who will take the furniture out of the house, the clothes off the children's backs, to get drink. More than that, they will actually do half a day's work to get drink for the other half. And the women are worse than the men when they once begin. Some things they know they *must* pay, so they find the money, as, for instance, for their rent. But as to the children, send them to school long enough without boots and a pair will be given; send them hungry enough and a meal will be given. And after a few days the boots will disappear and be no more seen in school; and the hungry child will come hungry day after day, with the usual story, 'Mother ain't giv' me no breakfast; she ain't got nuffin'—

begging, lying from their earliest infancy, encouraged by free giving without proper investigation. It is so easy to give small sums if you are pretty well off. It is so painful to see misery and suffering. It is so disagreeable to follow each case home and know the why and the wherefore.

Where children are really neglected by drunken parent or parents, you have only to apply to the ever-blessèd Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and you are helped at once. The lowest people know its proceedings, and are afraid of it, and will mend their ways as long as they are watched by it. Now, I am not denying there is poverty, want, and need of help; but the question is how to help it. If we give free schooling, free meals, and much free clothing, we are simply encouraging the already awful irresponsibility of these people, who bring large numbers of children into the world daily, without any thought or intention of providing for them. Like every one else, in some way or other, they must be made 'to pay their taxes.' And to help them efficiently they must be made to understand this. Every one must be fed,

but they must pay for the feeding according to their means, and nothing must be free. The wretched accommodation and the high rents in London make cooking at home a very difficult matter. In many cases the mother works out and has no time to get a dinner ready, even if she had the means.

Covent Garden has been overdone this year, like the other markets, with fruit and vegetables, and by those who live near there these things could be got for almost nothing. Yet in how many of the homes have fruit or vegetables ever been cooked? Potatoes are very cheap and good, but there is no time (and, I fear, no inclination) to clean and cook them. A very poor, under-fed boy from that neighbourhood has been having his meals in my house lately. He pushes aside roast pork and mutton, but eats heartily every vegetable he is given. He had never seen cooked apples.

How is all this to be helped and changed? I think I know, for I have tried it on a small scale. Let there be a large public kitchen, with three classes of dining-rooms and a table for *carrying away* dinners of any price desired.

This is a most important branch of the business.

In the first-class dining-room there must be clean tablecloths, knives, forks and spoons, and a bill of fare on every table, but no dinner served here must cost less than ninepence, even if the cheaper dishes be selected, for the service and utensils must be good. In the second-class there must be no tablecloths, but white oilcloth, and no dinner under sixpence must be served. In the third-class, long wooden tables and commoner utensils, and here dinners from one penny to fourpence or fivepence must be provided. First and most essential is perfect cleanliness everywhere, for, let me say from experience, no one is more particular about this than working people, however ill-kept their own homes may be. Next in importance is to use the best materials cooked in the best manner; for the best is the cheapest in the end, and by buying early and late can be had at very reasonable prices. Always provide what is in full season and a glut in the market.

There should be a large variety of dishes to suit all tastes. The bill of fare might be as

follows: pea soup—always the most popular soup—with a roll, 1d., or to carry away, 1d. a quart. Irish stew, 2d.; beefsteak pudding, and potatoes, 4d.; sausages, onions, and potatoes, 4d.; beefsteak pie and potatoes, 4d.; roast mutton, beef, or pork, and potatoes, 5d.; green vegetables, 1d.; fruit pudding or tart, baked and boiled jam rolls, plum pudding, blanc-mange, milky rice pudding, custard tarts, all at 1d. each. Cheese and bread, 1d. Beer may be sent out for.

There must be clear, bright fires in winter, and no smoking allowed. It is most important that such an establishment should be under the superintendence of a thoroughly qualified person—a lady would be preferable. She should be in the kitchen all morning, and present in the rooms all dinner-time, especially in the third-class or common dining-room. No suggestion or remarks should be resented as impertinent, but listened to carefully and kindly, for all pay for what they have, however humble the dish chosen. I know these things can be made, and well made, at the prices I have quoted, but suitable, large, airy rooms and appliances could not be provided

to start with. It would be a great boon if a small room could be set aside for ladies, for there is no class who need a comfortable, quiet, wholesome meal in the middle of the day more than school-teachers, typewriters, lady shop-assistants of all kinds, and there is no class who find it so difficult to get it within reasonable distance of their work, and within the limit of their purses.

The hundreds and hundreds of still-growing young men employed as clerks, shop-assistants, messengers, etc., who crowd the various tea and bread shops at dinner-time would hail a good hearty square meal at these prices with delight, and would be vastly strengthened thereby. Most of the above go home to another tea meal and 'something to it,' which means no regular dinner for four or five days a week—not a good way to keep up the standard of health and growth among our young people. Real charity is helping self-help. I know excellent school-teachers who are obliged to bring cold meat to school with them, there being no place near where they can get a dinner which is according to their taste and within their means.

As to those who can pay nothing, not even the 1d. for soup and bread, or the 2d. for Irish stew, they are few and far between. But even they can be given a ticket by those who know their case. Children's dinners can be dealt with in the same way. Invalids' dinners to carry away should form part of such a scheme, and how many a charitable person would be glad to pay for such dinner if they knew proper, well-cooked food would be sent as ordered by the doctor, but unattainable in the room or house of the sufferer. What a help to the parish nurse it would be!

Now, if at first sight this seems to cater for too many and too various clients, I would like to make it quite clear that by doing so is the only way to make it really a paying concern, and unless it is that, it is nothing. It is the shilling first-class dinner that makes the penny a quart good soup possible.

I do not say that it will be entirely self-supporting the first year, but if it fails the second it ought to be closed. After the second year it ought to be able to pay a fair rent for the building, and if there is any difficulty about that the upper rooms might be

let as lodgings to single men, for which the same superintendence and service necessary for the dinners would be sufficient.

VI

THE CRÈCHE

Of all charities the Day Nursery appeals most to women, and to women of all ages. It is a pity it is so generally called by a French name in this English country, though it is true it was in use in France long before it was introduced here. It was one of the earliest charities of the gentle nuns and working Sisters of the Poor, and I am inclined to believe they still manage their crèches better and more economically than any I have seen elsewhere; chiefly because their hearts are in it. With them it is a labour of love, and the absence of the hired matron and the committee of ladies is an untold ease and help in the work.

There is nothing more needed in London and other large towns than these day nurseries. Consider the circumstances, and you will see what a crying want it is. Widows with four to six little ones dependent on them are very common. If she be a sempstress, a charwoman,

an office cleaner, or a laundress, she must be very early at her work, often a long way from her rooms—for she can't move about to suit every change of employment; no neighbour will take her baby under sixpence a day, and generally there is another and another under five. What is she to do with them? Who is to dress them, get their breakfast, dinner, etc. Over five they *must* go to school. What about their going and coming, and their meals, even after they attain that great age? Of course, some mite older than the others must stay at home 'to mind the baby.' Then comes the school officer, a summons, and all the rest of it. She is helpless in it all, for she can do nothing else; she must go out if she is to put bread in their mouths. A cleaner or scrubber regularly employed gets ten shillings a week, and is most thankful for it. Even if there be a living father he is often out of work; then the mother must fall to and 'get a job.' Bread must be got somehow.

How *can* regular attendance at school be enforced in the face of this never-ending difficulty? Visit any school and note the attendance, or rather non-attendance. Ask the

teachers the almost invariable reason, and you will soon see the absolute necessity of doing something for these most helpless—I had almost said hopeless—little creatures, and their hardly less helpless mothers.

Now here is a womanly occupation for you, you lonely women. Here is a life full of interest, full of love, full of usefulness, and—believe or not, as you will—full of amusement. Oh, how these nurseries are wanted! How gratefully they would be received by the poor mothers! And the benefit to the children is unspeakable. But the day nursery, to be really useful, must not be hampered by hard and fast rules. Therefore, avoid the committee. Let two or three ladies have regular days of attendance, and let them keep to them. To be really satisfactory, the lady on duty must be there nearly all day—certainly till after the early dinner, and again to see the children sent properly home at night, for they are generally fetched by little people hardly bigger than themselves. Two large rooms are enough to begin with—a sleeping-room for the little ones, and a play-room, eating-room, and kitchen in one.

The very late hour at which the London poor go to bed makes a long quiet sleep in a warm, well-aired room essential to these babies, and it is best taken after the elder ones go to school and the place is quiet. I say 'the elder ones go to school,' for I think all children should be admissible to the nursery up to eight years old, and those who are fit should be taken to and fetched from the nearest school by the nursegirl. Here at once begins the habit of regular attendance—a habit of which the benefit will be felt in all the higher classes. A good hot breakfast of bread and milk and porridge and milk should begin the day at eight, children being admitted at seven, if desired, or even earlier if the mother's work requires it. Then let the scholars be washed, and clean overalls put on, and sent to school. It will generally be found desirable in the poorer districts to wash and redress the babies, after which ceremony they will gladly go to sleep. Soup or milk pudding is the best dinner for all such young children, and bread and jam and milk sufficient for tea. The latest hour for taking away the children should be seven o'clock, except by special permission, but the

parent should be allowed to take them as much earlier as he or she likes. If the children be motherless, the father will often wish to have them home when he leaves work. On Saturdays the nursery should close at two, to allow of extra cleaning. The children should be out of doors with the nursegirl (or girls, according to number) as much as possible. I have myself managed a nursery varying from forty to sixty-five children with two girls of fifteen under me. The charge ought to vary with the earnings of either father or mother. If the mother has no work, she does not require to use the nursery at all, and the children ought not to be taken in. If the father (where there is no mother) is in work, he ought to pay a fair proportion of his earnings. All this means a clear head and a loving heart, and it is no use any one undertaking the personal part of it who does not like chlldren, and to whom babies are a nuisance and keeping them clean a revolting task. But there are many girls and women still unmarried, but true mothers in heart and feeling, who like the company of children, and love children for themselves; let them take the personal work. Let other

equally good women, to whom the personal work would be most irksome, send their children's old clothes, old toys, a disused perambulator, a worn-out piano (an unending joy). Let the men who love their country and want to see a better generation arise, guarantee the rent. If the rent were guaranteed, and the wages of two young women paid, and the rooms furnished, I will, with such help as I have indicated above, undertake to keep a satisfactory day nursery where the children shall pay a shilling a week—such payment to be made *in advance* always. The mothers who use the nursery ought to be made to take it in turns to scrub the rooms every evening except Saturday.

I have entered into these particulars because it is no use pleading for things unless you make it clear what you want. I want a good, large, well-managed nursery in the middle of every group of schools—the poorer the neighbourhood, the greater the need, the more difficult the task. Such nurseries would bring us in much closer contact with the mothers and the children than anything else. From the prattle of the little ones the real condition

of the homes would be learned, and much imposture circumvented, while the real needs of the silent and backward would become known.

Take a typical case—I could give hundreds such: a widow with six children under nine years old. The father was in a club and insured; in fact, a decent man. She got about thirty pounds from these sources at his death. It is exhausted and she must go to work. She can earn the usual ten shillings a week. The parish allows her three shillings and some loaves, but who is going to look after the children? No one will take the baby for less than five shillings a week, *without food*, and what is to become of the others? A labourer in regular work—wife died 'with the last little 'un'—with three children under five, told me he had tried six women one after the other to 'mind 'em.' but 'they was drunk as often as not.' He paid eight shillings a week to them. I took the children, and he fetched them himself every night a little after five o'clock. He paid five shillings a week for the three as gratefully as possible.

Now, here is a charity bred of true love of the spirit of true helpfulness. It is not pauper-

ising, for it must never be free. Every one using it must pay according to their means. The little children would begin life in clean surroundings, and be taught decent habits. They would have wholesome, plain, economical food, and be gently handled and spoken to. Is it to be supposed that the first eight years of their existence spent in such an atmosphere would leave no trace?

The reasons of the failure of so many nurseries in London are easily to be found: too many people giving advice about them, and giving nothing else, the real charge being left to a matron who is paid for her work; and the hard and fast rules drawn up by people knowing little of those with whom they are dealing; and the excessive price charged for admission, putting it out of the power of the very poor—who need it most—to avail themselves of it. The reasons of the success of the crèches in France, or under-sisterhoods here, is that with them it is all plainer and simpler, and above all, that it is a labour of love. 'My child, give me thine heart.'

VII

I THINK it is an undeniable fact that it is much easier, as it is certainly more general, to be kind and charitable in our dealings with the acknowledged poor than in our dealings with our own class or with a class a degree below us in the social scale. In this sort of charity we are all sadly wanting at one time or another, and yet nowhere is charity more needed. The genteel poor, the people who are obliged 'to keep up appearances,' are the poorest of all, and their self-denial is wonderful. I don't think it is in a worthy cause, for I believe it would be infinitely more sensible to think less of appearance and more of comfort, and if the clerk *must* wear a black coat and tall hat to go to the office, and *must* be dressed 'like a gentleman,' that is no sort of reason why the little clerks should dress in the same way, and think themselves too good for the free schools, etc., etc. The wretched struggle to look and dress on a hundred or a hundred and fifty pounds a year as if they had three or four hundred pounds is too common and deplorable; but it is almost universal in

this country. An artisan getting three pounds a week has a good, comfortable, plentiful home and plenty of pleasure therewith, because he has no appearance to keep up. You will say all this has nothing to do with charity, but I think it has a great deal. The upper middle class is very intolerant of the lower middle class; they jar on each other constantly, and judge each other unfairly. Pray, upper middle class, don't *you* like to know people a little above you socially, rather than people a little below you? Are you equally kind and genial to both? Take school teachers in a country neighbourhood, for instance. Think how well educated they require to be to be qualified, and then see what a lonely life they lead! They cannot associate with the labourers; the upper class will not associate with them. The clergyman's wife may ask them occasionally, but not if she has a smart party. Why not? Nobody wants the relaxation more. They are young people eager for life and their share of pleasure. Will they do your young people good or harm? If they are fit to teach the school, they will do them good—and oh, the brightness you country ladies might bring into

their lives! I have known some very well, and one and all have made the same complaint. 'We don't know what to do on Saturdays and Sundays; we've no one to speak to and nowhere to go.' Now, young ladies, here's a chance for you: take these girls or young women out for a walk or a drive or ask them to your tennis parties when they have a holiday or after schooltime and see what pleasure you'll give. You will be doing as good work as 'slumming,' though perhaps not so exciting.

Again, how we country people hate the tourist, the Bank-holiday people, the cyclists from town, the shop lads, the young clerks who cannot afford to go about otherwise! Of all these people we complain as a nuisance—as spoiling the country. I know a place where a petition was sent up to the railway managers to ask that the Sunday League people might not come there any more, and it was so largely signed that no more league tickets are granted there now. It is a place surrounded by commons and eminently suited to receive numbers without overcrowding, but it has been closed to the poor town workers because

for some three days in the year they came between the wind and the gentility of the residents. Charitable, truly! Why cannot we be kindly and indulgent to the vulgarities and ways of poor dear respectable 'Arries and 'Arriets as well as to the vices of the slums? They are too near us; that 's why.

They do not want our patronage. But they are very appreciative of kindness all the same. I saw a group of excursionists looking through my gate admiring the flowers which were then making a fine show. I went up to them and asked if they would care to walk round my little place and see the view from my lawn, which is very beautiful. They giggled a little at first, but came in gladly. I took them round and suggested they should eat their lunch on the heather out of sight of the house. I also showed them a swing and a see-saw, and bade them welcome. We never heard a sound from them; they left no paper about, and when they were ready to go, having spent about three hours in the place, they all shook hands with me, and when I proposed that they should come with me to gather some flowers to take home their gratitude and astonishment made me ashamed.

'Well! I never did, and us perfect strangers too!'

Just a year later some of the same party turned up again, bringing some older people with them. They did not come in nor make any sign, but I saw them without recognising them, and asked them in; but before I could finish, hands were stretched out by all, as to an old friend.

'We've brought father and mother down this time! We told 'em what a lovely time we had last year, and how kind you were, and we settled to bring 'em this year.'

Again, the quiet, restful, respectable day was spent in the garden and the heather. The memory of the previous day had lasted a whole year, and their gratitude—for what? a simple act of courtesy and a friendly word—had lasted too. Yet these were typical 'Arries and 'Arriets—minus the self-assertion bred of our superciliousness.

And as to charity in our intercourse with our equals. A very nice good man said to me the other evening, 'I would not like my young wife to go out alone about the slums and courts, among all sorts of people. She has a house and young children to take care

of, and servants to look after, and friends to see; she has enough to do at home, and has no right to run risks.' I quite agree with him. And if the courts and slums are not fit places for a young married woman, still less are they fit places for young girls to spend their life in. There is plenty of work for them without that. That form of charity requires particular circumstances and particular gifts to make it either advisable or efficacious, and there are plenty of people who enjoy both, if they will use them in that way. But are the young married women and girls to be denied the exercise of the most excellent gift altogether? Surely not. Do you think it is no charity to ask into your gay house old people who love youth and brightness? Perhaps they are not so amusing to you, but they are full of interesting memories and experiences when drawn out by respectful affection. They don't care about your duty visits and talk made up to suit them—as *you* think; they like your silly jokes and merry laughter; they like to be treated with ease and loving welcome. It brings back their youth and warms their old hearts. It prevents

them from becoming hard and bitter. Nearly all old people are ready—too ready—to think themselves in the way; let it be your loving part to make them feel how mistaken this is. Take your bright young face, your merry laugh, your innocent little gossip to them to cheer up the long, lonely winter days, and, still more, the evenings. Be very attentive and tender to them, and you will soon feel the delightful interest of their experiences, and come to look forward to seeing them as one of the greatest pleasures of your life.

But in no way is the want of charity towards each other so constantly shown and so bitterly felt as in the way we speak of each other. It seems impossible, but there is real pleasure in retailing a scandal. It grows and it grows till the mustard seed hasn't a chance with it. Every one has some fresh particular to give. The truly virtuous listen with pursed-up lips and much avidity. The reckless laugh. The very high-toned write to the supposed sinners, and warn them in guarded language that they can no longer give them the light of their countenance. Trace this scandal and you will find, in many cases, it originated in a

mistake, in a difference of opinion—but it has been so fostered and nourished that it has grown into a noxious plant, poisoning the life or lives of innocent, well-meaning, if careless, people. And if it be true in part, be sure it is not all true. 'Tout savoir, c'est tout pardonner.' We never can know half. Why cannot we all resolve to talk no scandal—'no, nor listen to it'? Is it a pleasure to strike the wounded, to kick the fallen? It must be, or we wouldn't do it day after day as we do. It were better for society and the nation as a whole to leave the poor unvisited, charitable schemes unwatched, and to keep our tongues from scandal and speaking evil of one another, than to give all our living to the poor, and devote our lives to their service, while at the same time we are breaking hearts and destroying the peace of homes by evil-speaking and—not willingly, but most surely—lying and slandering. It is well to be honest, it is well to be pure, it is well to be upright and honourable, but it is greater and better far to be loving in word and deed. For the greatest of all is charity.

THE OPINIONS OF AN OLD LADY

THESE articles were written during a visit paid to us by my revered and much-loved friend Mrs. Margaret Oliphant. She read every word of them and knew they were for publication in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. So let them stand. They amused her, and the temptation to publish them was irresistible. Again, thanks to the Editor.

CHRISTINA STEEVENS.

I

THE rain is certainly a great drawback, in the country, to the idle portion of the world, especially in holiday time, when to be out of doors is one's chief thought. The trees swept with a white blast, and bearing away from the wind—the dark firs groaning and the light birches quivering—become a melancholy prospect when that is all you have to look out upon hour after hour. Looking out upon them for a whole long, unbroken day, the impulse to push that wall of living and quivering greenness half a mile farther away was strong upon me, and came to a raid of tree-

cutting, as you shall perhaps hear another time. But the mistress of a house, especially when there are guests in it, has little time for her own sensations, and I was much concerned for my Old Lady, who I was aware loved variety and to see something going on.

There was no hope, even of a call, in a day of constant down-pouring rain. Indeed, if any one in the neighbourhood was bold enough to go out at all I knew, of course, they would go to the Bernards, who had, poor people! invited a garden party for that afternoon.

I found her being settled by her maid, with all her little paraphernalia, in the library, and with a pile of books—the books of the present day — around her, some of which she was touching delicately with the tips of her fingers, as if a little doubtful whether they were fit to be touched, and making little sniffs at them, with a faint quiver of her nostrils. She received my apologies for the weather quite graciously. 'It would not be your fault, my dear,' she said, 'if it were twenty times worse, though you take the blame on yourself so generously, and I am not one of the people who object to a wet day now and then, so long

as it is a thoroughly pronounced wet day, and you can arrange yourself accordingly.'

'And I hope, dear madam, that you find something you can read,' said I, somewhat anxiously, for her aspect was discouraging. She sniffed again, more decidedly this time, and drew her lips together, making what, if I had not so much respect for her, I should call a *moue*.

'I can read them, my dear,' she said. 'I have a robust appetite. I can read the *Family Herald*, which my maid takes in regularly. They are a sort of bane and antidote: the *Family Herald* all victim and fine manners, the new literature the reverse. I think I prefer Lady Angelina, or even the angelic governess who triumphs over every temptation, to the flushed and walloping young woman of the others; but you know I am old-fashioned. I begin to lose myself in the sound, and don't know which is which—Key-notes, or Discords, or Eclogues, or Spasms, they are all in the same tone. The women are a trifle more indecent than the young men, but neither the one nor the other, as far as I can see, are acquainted with anything better

in life than those beings whom in my time we called by disagreeable names, and desired to hear of as little as possible.'

'It is the reign of realism,' said I. 'They all wish to depict things as they see them.'

'The reign of fiddlesticks!' cried my Old Lady. 'Are all your friends, my dear, debauched women? Do you expect daily to hear that Mrs. So-and-so has eloped, or that her nice husband has another establishment somewhere? There is a nightjar among the birds, and you all profess to like him as he croaks about in the dark. Like him if you please, I have no objection; but don't try to persuade me that there are nothing but nightjars in the woods.'

I allowed that a number of them might be too much for one's equanimity, but I tried to say a word for the other people. 'You can't deny they are more picturesque,' said I. 'There are stronger sensations; there is more to be said about them. The writer who takes up that class of subject is furnished with more primitive situations.'

'So that is it,' said my Old Lady. 'It is good to come to the bottom of the matter.

He is saved from the necessity of invention—indeed, he does not require any imagination at all; there is something in that. I say *he* from custom, but it should be *she* very often. However, if the sentiments of a courtesan are the most real thing in nature, it is better that they should be interpreted by a young man than a young woman. The most curious thing I have met with as yet is the nice young man who writes a book all in the character of one of those persons! That is the best he can do—a young man full of education to the finger-tips, to put himself into the shape of a light lady! I know the boy, and he is not a bad boy within; that is the astounding thing. I don't understand it at all.'

I ventured to say that I believed it was a fashion, the end of the century, and all that sort of thing, which I don't really believe in much myself. So I was not surprised that my old friend did not pay much attention. 'There is another of those books which out-Herods Herod,' she went on, 'in which the heroine—a beautiful and high-souled creature, as you are expected to believe—not only "gives herself," as they say, at the first word,

but quietly kills the unlucky baby that ensues, and thinks no harm. I allow that is a strong situation if you like. But if you call it realism and writing about the things one knows! She confides the past to the man just before they begin to be happy soon after, and he thinks no harm. Of course, it is a woman who goes that length; your young men have not altogether so free a hand. They have it upon their minds that they may be called upon to answer for what they say and do. There is a lingering sense of what used to be called responsibility.'

'To whom?' I said.

'Ah, my dear, you have me there! Not to the true and great Authority, but to something—a fetich, a survival, as you call it. Now the women, as I told you the other day, are freelances, owning no head. A man would never have gone the length of killing that baby, not in fiction, by the hands of a lovely heroine who was none the worse. He daren't do it. Nothing but a woman dare go as far as that.'

'I never know where to have you,' I said, a little vexed. 'Sometimes you are on one side,

sometimes on the other. One would think you were going back to the dark ages when the men were reckoned superior beings.'

My Old Lady said nothing for a moment, and then she burst out into a low laugh. 'They are not very grateful to me,' she said; 'they are not as civil as they used to be in my day, when every one was respectful and listened when an old lady spoke, though they might laugh afterwards. Now they stand up between me and the light, and talk to each other over my head. They stare and are silent when I venture to make a remark. When I come across one who hears my voice, and treats me like a man and a brother, I am quite elated! Poor dear boys; they are at the top of the tree, as they think, and they don't like to hear how many of them I have seen topple over—which is quite natural. As for the old ones, there is a sense in which the older men and women are each other's natural enemies——'

'Dear madam!' I cried in horror.

'Quite true, my dear. They say "That eternal old woman," and I say, "Defend me from those old fogeys." The young ones,

there is a natural charity between us, when they are not *too* contemptuous, you know. The better they are—I am afraid to say it—the less feeling they have on this point. I have a kind of consciousness when one of your young men is condescending and friendly that there must be a screw loose somewhere, and that if I knew a little more about him I should have to say "poor fellow."'

'Dear lady,' said I, 'don't you think you are a little unjust? You speak as if the frivolous and the foolish pleased you best; I am sure you can't mean that. It would be immoral for one thing; and if any one should respect the higher character and the finer purpose, it ought to be you. You ought not to be carried away by appearances or by civilities, as you say—you who know so well the difference between the worthy and the unworthy. I don't mean to say anything to the disadvantage of any one,' I cried in haste, having got a little more earnest about it than I had any intention of appearing to be.

'I sit reproved,' said my old friend, folding her hands, but I saw mischief in her eyes.

'No, my dear,' she said a little after, 'I don't mean that I prefer the bad boy to the good, but what am I to do if the superior will have none of me? And to err is human, whereas to despise your neighbours is always "a peety," as we say in Fife. But let us talk about the fashions,' she said, backing off, in dress, instead of in men and women. It is a safer subject, and most interesting to me, who allow myself one gown in a year. What are your ideas in regard to those prodigious sleeves, my dear?'

II

I WAS sitting in my dear old friend's room, looking out from her window upon the line of trees which stood up against the sky in all the freshness of the morning, when it occurred to me suddenly that an opening was wanted in that living screen.

I had been rather proud of it for its thickness and mass of green half an hour before, but there is nothing like a sudden inspiration which comes upon one with a dart of light and certainty. I am afraid I interrupted my

Old Lady in the midst of her talk by the outcry I made. 'I see what you want here,' I said. 'You want an outlet. You want a glimpse across,' and then I called from the window to the master of the house, who was roaming by. 'I want some trees cut,' I cried. And he was in that condition in which Satan always finds some mischief that wants doing. His hands were idle, and he called for axes and other instruments of destruction, and I rushed out to oversee and supervise.

My Old Lady sat by her window and contemplated us benignly. She said it was just like me, with a nod of her head. She afterwards said that to see the boys of the establishment flying to the scene of this sudden excitement with murderous weapons, and the white figure of the master standing up slim and straight against the dark bristles of the condemned pines, gave her a thrill as of some electrical energy let loose and whizzing through the air. We are, perhaps, hasty people, for the sound of the axe was disturbing the idle peacefulness in less time than I take to tell it. The pine was tough and strong. The bystanders stood breathless till he began to nod.

Then nothing could prevent us from rushing through the waning beauty of the summer wilderness of flowers, which had grown to look like hay, and making ready to receive him as he fell. Down he came, resisting to the last, sullen enough, and not without reason—to be made chips and firewood of all in a moment without warning! I looked up to see my Old Lady standing up, sharing somewhat in the excitement, but with a look of regret and sadness on her dear face, as she said with a little triumph, 'You have not opened up the view at all, and you have destroyed a fine young tree.'

And now our blood was up, and we flew on from one to another and another, and the sound of the axe began to ring again through the clear air, stimulated by the fresh, resinous scent of the newly-cut pines. Presently one figure after another appeared from different points. Our friend B. had for some time formed a new feature in our grounds. You saw the back of a lounging chair under the trees, and over that back the top of a grey hat and the edge of a paper held in two invisible hands. That was B. A faint blue

curl of smoke came from his direction. The prospect was one with which we had grown familiar. It was a dissolving view appearing now here, now there. But what was my surprise when, looking up for a moment from the absorbing task of holding fast by its top branches the tree at which our master was at work, I saw the cheerful countenance approaching without either coat or hat, and armed with another axe!

My Old Lady had got up and come to the window, and her remarks were full of edification. She, too, had caught the infection. 'The cry is, still they come,' she said, and there, to be sure, I saw hurrying from the other side a portly friend of great stature, whom I shall call M., and who had come to pay a morning call—that was his polite intention; but he was already struggling with his frock-coat when I saw him. 'Give it to me; I'll show you how to use it,' he cried. It was the second axe he demanded, and forgetting all about his visit and everything else, he fell to with a will. The master went on hewing, after his fashion, silent and swift, but B. groaned and M. shouted as they turned to.

'My dear,' said my Old Lady, an hour after when she came out, picking her steps among the fallen branches, 'you must have some ulterior views. Don't tell me this bosquet, this bower among the trees, was made only to give me an enlarged prospect. You have been providing a place to flirt in for your next party, the party you are talking about. I see through you. My poor young friend, Mr. B., heedless of his doom, has been working his own undoing; or, perhaps'—and she raised her eyebrows and glanced towards our other friends.

'Nothing of the sort!' cried I, 'you are an ungrateful Old Lady. It was all to give you a little more air and view.'

'Ah,' she said, 'I know you have ulterior views. Well, a little flirting will hurt nobody. Whatever the change of pastimes may be in other respects, that primitive amusement always holds its ground. Your athletic sports would have scared us out of our wits; but we would all take a turn at the other. As for racing and jumping and your other delights——'

'Dear lady,' said I sweetly, 'tell me what

you did in those days—to amuse yourselves, I mean. Of course, we all know how useful you were. But for play—and when the flirting began to pall——'

'Don't be impertinent, my dear,' she said. 'The flirting does not seem to pall nowadays, from all one hears. What did we do? It is a little difficult to tell you what we did. Our amusements were not so many as yours, but we made a great deal of them. There was the amusement of looking forward to them, for which we had much time. You don't know what a delightful amusement that is. And then we practised the noble art of doing without. What did Miss Austen's young people do? There are private theatricals in *Mansfield Park*, which I don't like so well as her other stories, but they were very naughty, and brought every disaster in their train.'

'Which ours never do,' said I.

The Old Lady laughed. 'I wonder what Emma would say if she were to come a visiting to some of your houses and be asked to join your sports. Yet Emma in her day was an advanced young woman. If you were to

write her story nowadays, between her invalid father and Miss Bates in the village, what a dull life hers would seem; but she was in fact extremely cheerful, and the book is as light-hearted as possible. The men shot and hunted and drove curricles—I don't remember anything else they are said to have done. In the country they were a great deal with the ladies. I hear now of a dreadful Moloch called Exercise which devours the young men—a thing which never troubled Mr. Darcy or Henry Tilney or any of those heroes. The poor young wives look very forlorn. There must be cricket or football or golf wherever they go, and they see little of their young husbands. Golf is the last straw which breaks the temper and the patience of these poor young women. I love the game of my country, but it is an exercise which can be pursued in all weathers, and therefore they are never free of it. It is this mania for exercise that has driven you poor women to amusements of a violent character. That is one thing they never did in our day.'

'Dear friend,' said I, feeling my advantage and more sweetly than ever, 'the question

is not what you didn't do, but what you did.'

'You are a little malicious puss,' she cried, 'for I can't answer you. We certainly did not "go in," as you say, for athletics or imitate the sports of a village fair. But we were happy enough. Fun seemed to bubble up naturally, perhaps because we were not always on the look-out for it. We should have died with shame to think of taking part in a three-legged race or a wheelbarrow race, or any such clod-hoppers' amusements. No harm, my dear, only it was not our way. I hope,' she said, turning round with a way she has when she means to break off a conversation, 'that Mr. B. and Mr. M. have had some refreshment after their hard work. We always called it refreshment in our time. Now you probably say beer—or even something worse.'

'They have probably taken it into their own hands, and had "something worse,"' I said.

'Well, well!' said my Old Lady, 'we must allow for changed traditions; but we always said "refreshment" with dignified vagueness in our day.'

III

'CHARITIES!' said my Old Lady; 'there are too many of them, my dear.'

We were returning from a visit we had made to a little establishment among the bracken, where a number of children from the London slums, once pale and sharp, too much developed in brain and too little in body, had grown into a sturdy little crew of rustics—the boys famous with their ponies and all the outside work, the girls growing with a delightful mixture of freedom and perfect subordination into the cheerful labours of the house. I have too much interest in this little band to speak much of them myself, but my old friend knew them all, and though she had not the caressing habits common to many of their visitors, she smiled on them very graciously from a little distance and took pleasure and interest in their well-doing.

'I don't call *this* a charity,' she added quickly, lest she should wound my feelings. 'My dear, there is no virtue at all in any part you take—

> "It 's not from fear of just damnation :
> It 's just a casual inclination."

You like it, and you can't deny the fact.'

'Like it!' I said; 'I love them, if that's what you mean.'

'That's all the difference,' said my Old Lady, nodding her head. 'It's no merit, my dear, no merit. Now, had it been I who had managed that woeful two hundred of yours the other day, and fed them and guided them and caressed them, it would have been merit, real merit in me. I prefer to look on from a little distance, and see you do it, and conclude comfortably at my ease that you are enjoying yourself, and that none of us need feel small in comparison. The old symbol of charity—don't you remember?—in the old pictures was the figure of a woman with children clinging to her all round. Now I acknowledge one great virtue in your society nowadays. It is that it has become the fashion to do all sorts of kind things for the poor.'

'I hope it is more than a fashion, dear madam,' said I.

'Fashion is not a bad thing,' said my old friend. As a matter of fact, when we can be troubled, and it is quite convenient, we all

like to do kind things—that is my experience of the world—for the poor. It is a far more difficult thing, you know, to be kind to those who are not the poor. But when fashion comes in it becomes imperative, and is no longer inconvenient. I am very well pleased—or I should be if I were given over to good deeds—to have fashion for an auxiliary. Things always become so much easier when it is the right thing to do them. I used to say of our schoolboys that to 'change' so often as they do would have been an odious tyranny if it had been ordered by the people at home, but being the fashion of their own community it is quite easy and pleasant. Fashion is a great thing.'

We were just passing a party of what we sometimes call 'trippers.' In the American books which are so common now they are called 'summer boarders,' and we sometimes use that phrase. They are an object of great contempt and dislike to the inhabitants of a country district, especially if it is in any way a show district, celebrated for its beautiful views; though I don't know why this should be, for they are very harmless, and look at us

residents with a sort of awe and envy which is almost flattering.

The party in this case was more fine than usual. The ladies were attired in trimmings of many colours, after the mode of last season, which mixed pinks and purples, and blues and greens in such a wild and lavish way; and with hats like the hanging gardens of Babylon.

'When the fashion is like that?' said I, with an irreverence which was unbecoming towards my venerable friend. But she did not resent it. On the contrary, when she looked at them her eyes too were filled with a kind of awe.

'My dear, it takes away my breath,' she said. 'It is bad enough among the smart people; but what have these innocents done to be attired without any will of theirs in such rags as those? It is a dreadful thing to see a set of human beings giving up their independence, their sense of anything that is fit. You may laugh: they have no sense of what is fit.'

'But they know what the fashions are,' cried I triumphantly.

'I should like,' said my Old Lady, 'to make

you discriminate, and not to run away with two versions of a word as if they were one. I don't wish to be didactic, but fashion is one thing, my dear, and "the fashions" is another. Just as charity, the fair woman, and charities, the things that distribute tickets and are governed by committees, are quite different. One is the plural? Yes, yes, if that is all you know.'

I allow that our sandy roads are very rough, making every kind of carriage jolt terribly, and exceedingly destructive to the temper. But in a minute or two, when we had reached the smoother part, my old friend resumed: 'I have gone through a great many phases of both,' she said. 'To begin with, there was an old way at home, where we used "to send portions," as the Bible has it, on all the feast days, which was only by way of being kind to poorer neighbours and not charity at all. And I once went through a terrible course of public charities. Don't go near that sort of thing, my dear! I was once taken to the London Tavern, I think the place was called, where there was a great room full of stands like a fancy fair, and busy people going about barter-

ing tickets. "I will give you ten British orphans, if you will give me five idiots and so many incurables." I never was so horrified in my life. I had almost countermanded all my subscriptions. But, I suppose, they are necessary evils,' said my old friend, shaking her head; 'and there are some people who can only be moved that way.'

'Dear lady, I have myself a number of candidates on hand,' said I. 'I was going to speak to you, for I am sure you have votes for everything.' She threw up her hands and made as if she would spring from the carriage. 'Votes,' she cried, 'why don't they keep their poor folk themselves—the people who ask for votes? There are deplorable papers that come to one by every post, with the sad story of this one and that one, who are perishing and will die if they don't get into this or that institution. Every one of these, if you will believe me, is recommended by eight or ten people well-to-do, more or less rich. How would it be if each group made its private subscription and took its protégé on its own individual shoulders, and allowed its neighbours to do likewise in peace? However,' she

said with a laugh, 'this is one of my pet grievances, and I dare say there is much to be said on both sides.'

'I think so,' said I, 'if you would look into the matter. The great institutions are wonderful places. They have all the improvements and the easements and the comforts which scarcely any one except the very rich can have at home.'

She shrugged her shoulders, but she did not say any more on that subject. 'I am full of prejudices,' she said; 'it is one of the penalties of growing old. But though I don't like the committee's way, I am pleased with fashion. It 's a pretty thing to settle as surely as the cut of a sleeve that every woman must do something to make her poor folk more comfortable. Fashion may be bad as a motive, but the habit is a pretty thing. Your skirt must be cut in this way, and you must see that you have a treat for the children. Fifty pounds (or whatever you please) for your gowns and so many Christmas dinners. The combination is amusing, which is another advantage, and it 's pretty. It throws no complacence of superior virtue into the act, but

makes it natural, which is far better. Here are your "trippers" again.'

And here indeed they were, with all their chiffon draperies blown about, and the flower gardens on their heads bristling as if they had caught among the needles of the fir-trees which abound on our hills. I fear I had a sort of malicious satisfaction in these proofs that they had no business there, and I fear me also that my old friend espied this wicked sentiment in my face, for she laughed a little softly to herself as she looked from me to them.

'My dear,' she said, 'where do the trippers come in? Probably they want their little time in the country as much as your children from the slums, and enjoy it more, for they are capable of at least more kinds of pleasure. Yet I see scorn upon your brow. Does charity of spirit, the other kind of charity, draw the line at the summer boarder?' my Old Lady said.

IV

We were seated on the lawn, in the freshness of the morning, under the shade of the big beech. Nothing is so pleasant as that early

coolness and brightness, when it happens to be holiday time and one can take advantage of it. The air is clearer than in the evening, there is a sensation of beginning instead of ending.

My old friend had been saying to me that, though in old age all the time was holiday, and the burden and heat of the day were over for her, yet she always took pleasure in the sensation of the morning.

'"Here has been dawning another blue day,'" she said. 'My dear old Carlyle's verses are very rough, but I say them to myself often in the middle of the summer night, when the blue of the dawn is stealing in.'

And with that we began to talk of youth, which is always so full of interest to old people. There had been a little party on the lawn the evening before.

'Yes,' said my Old Lady; 'the young women are very pleasant to behold. I liked the looks of them. Pretty? Ye-es; rather, perhaps, nice looking—plenty of good looks, but not so much of that superlative thing called beauty, which is rare except in story-books; but there is one thing which I notice nowadays wherever I go, whether it is in the

marriages, or in society, or at a country party. It is odd, and I scarcely know how to account for it. They are all—you must have remarked it—so much older than they used to be.'

'Older, dear madam?' said I, thinking of the bloom and freshness of my last night's guests, with a sort of horror at the word.

My Old Lady nodded her head a great many times, as she has a way of doing.

'It is sometimes improving, though sometimes, perhaps, the reverse,' she said; 'but it used to be eighteen who was foremost in the old days; and now, if you will think a little, you will find that it is eight-and-twenty, or even more, who has all the cry, as Dante says. There is a different code for one and for the other, and that lies at the bottom of a great many of those changes you are always talking of. In my day eighteen was so much in the foreground that the other age had to copy her little ways and pretend to stand on her level, and was laughed at as an elderly young lady for her pains. Now we, or rather you, have changed all that.'

'I allow,' said I, 'that girls marry much later than they used to do, which is a great

improvement, I think. But how can you call *old* a young woman in her very prime?'

'My dear, said my Old Lady sharply, 'Willie is older than Joe, I believe; but I do not call that hero old. The young women *are* in their prime; but they are not to be classed with your little girls. Literature and the critics are very much puzzled with this twist of affairs. They still cannot get little Mary out of their heads, who *used* to be the symbol. Nowadays the symbol is quite different; her standard no longer answers the needs of the moment, and they throw the weight of their confusion upon the present heroine, as if it were the woman who had changed.'

I was still a little resentful to hear all this, thinking of my young friends: for somehow it is disagreeable to speak of age in respect of a young woman, even though a few additional years may be nothing but an improvement; therefore I kept grumbling a little in undertones, 'My pretty Patty, for instance,' I said, with what I felt to be a snort. 'My Lucy! far more delightful than any chit from the nursery!' and so on.

My Old Lady laughed, but took no notice.

'Do you remember,' she said, 'when we both watched a friend of ours—the nicest girl in the world, but thirty or so—straying about through a ballroom on the arm of a partner of twenty, and pretending to be pleased with his little prattle? Poor young woman! What could she do? If she did not go to the little parties and demean herself like her young sister, she had to fall back upon the dowagers and be treated accordingly. Now she is in the ascendant and little Mary has to copy *her*, and does it very badly, pretending to be grown up and to know so much that *I* feel like a little girl beside her. I don't know which is worst, the young who pretend to be old or the old who pretend to be young. In the meantime, I am very much interested as to how eight-and-twenty is going to carry it out.'

'She carries it out very badly in a great many ways,' cried I, changing my tone in the warmth of my feelings on that subject, which are well known. 'She goes out on her bicycle and comes back all flustered and flushed, with her hair hanging about her face and her dress like a wisp. She holds a cigarette in her fingers, making them smell of tobacco, and

puffs her smoke in your face. She talks about music-halls, calling the performers by their names, and writes, or wants to write, in the newspapers, and thinks of nothing but how to make herself conspicuous.'

'What!' said my old friend. 'Your pretty young women of yesterday, your greatest friends, the girls you brag to me about?'

'Yes, yes!' I said, 'and no, no! They do, some of them, all that, but not all, not all of them; and yet they are the nicest girls. They are as good as gold. I could kill them sometimes, but I love them dearly. Tell me what is to be done to stop it. They are far too good to make people laugh at them or disapprove of them.'

My Old Lady laughed and told me that then she recognised her——; but I will not write down the pet name she gave me, which was for me alone.

'You have always been sure since ever you were born,' she said, 'that everything could be set right if you only were told what was to be done. No, my dear; your young women are at present the bandits of existence, the freelances, without even a captain to rule over

them. They have no duties to speak of, and no responsibilities: they have not even to answer, as men have, for what they say and do. The shield of little Mary is still over them. And in the strength of that impunity they think they can do whatever they please. In the meantime, what pleases them is to do what the men do—as if they were the example! But, by and by, it is to be hoped, they will tire of that. It 's very absurd to revolt and so forth only in order to do what the young men do, which is not much to brag of. Some day I 'll tell you what I think about the young men. In the meantime there is one practical step I could suggest—if it were my business, which, perhaps, after all, it is not.'

'What?' cried I eagerly, glad to hear of something that could be done.

'My dear, I would have your husband to bring in a bill——'

'Yes?' I cried, for bringing in a bill did sound like something practical at last.

She laughed, and her dear old eyes twinkled, 'You won't like the expedient when you hear it. My dear, he shall bring in a bill—to have

them all married by Act of Parliament at twenty-four hours' notice. The husbands should be poor, and rather cross, if I could choose them; and if that doesn't cure them of their nonsense I don't know what will do it,' my Old Lady said, as she went away smiling.

V

My Old Lady seated herself on the lawn, desiring me to place her chair in the sunshine —not in the shade. 'For,' said she, 'we are too high up here to be very warm, and the sun is a good thing of which we have not had too much for the last month, and whereas I was once young and could have thrown myself on the grass, as you, my dear, so very imprudently do now, I am old and like to have a rug and a footstool, though I allow that the grass is beautiful, like green velvet after all this rain.'

'And it was like a piece of old faded brown drugget before,' said I. 'There is much virtue in the rain. It has been the saving of the clover, and as for the root crop——'

'My dear,' said my Old Lady, with a wave of her hand, 'I am a town person and I take

no interest in the root crops. I do not say anything against the rain. If such an arrangement could be made as that it should rain during the night, I should with pleasure consent to its existence as salutary for everybody; for it is a good thing for the roads, and lays the dust better than any mechanical contrivance. It is even good for your sandy roads, for it smoothes out the ruts and binds the drift together, which makes driving possible, though not what any one can call agreeable, along your dreadful lanes.'

'Our sandy roads, dear madam,' said I, a little huffy, as was natural, 'have this good, that they dry up directly, so that you never feel any damp on the grass, not even with that little slipper of yours.'

She put out her foot and looked at it critically, as if to test my statement. It was very neatly shod in a shoe of prunella, old fashioned, but very well shaped—not, I need hardly say, with a toe like the horn of a crescent.

'No, it is not wet,' she said, with a little reluctance. 'The damp strikes up, it does not settle down.'

It seemed to me at the moment that this

was an impressive remark, disparaging indeed, but stately, and not to be contested, though afterwards it appeared to me less convincing. She emphasised it by delicately rubbing her black satin knee.

'I am sometimes a little rheumatic,' she said, as if stating a simple fact which had no connection with what went before. 'At my age that is a natural accessory, like one's shawl. No, I have never tried Aix; the cure would be worse than the complaint. I do not care for baths nor the disturbance of life and the proper habits of life which they demand. All very well for men who are always committing themselves and bringing on all kinds of troubles. We have no temptation to their irregularities, and why should we interfere with their cures? But women will push in everywhere nowadays, my dear, and set up for being just as bad as the men——'

'You mean they think they are quite as good as the men,' said I.

'I mean what I say,' said my Old Lady sharply. 'Nobody cares for being called good nowadays. Indeed, nobody ever did, so far as I can remember. Goodness, quotha! No,

my dear, that's not the sort of praise one cares about.'

'It was not anything of that kind—not anything moral I meant,' said I, shocked.

'No, my dear, it is something immoral you all mean. You think it fine to protest that you know as much as the man, and could be just as naughty if you liked, and are not shocked at anything. Little fools! You know nothing whatever about it. I can put up with a great many pretences—pretending to be rich when you're poor is pathetic, sometimes only shabby-pathetic, but sometimes fine; pretending to believe that all your own geese are swans is silly, but it has its good side; even pretending to be better than you are is bearable; it's a homage to virtue. But pretending to be worse—pretending to understand and to smile at what you don't know and loathe—that is what I cannot away with. Oh, yes, you do it; don't contradict me. You let all sorts of scandals be talked of in your presence, and join in them and pretend you know all about them. *Our* men would have horsewhipped or kicked out of the house any one who had brought those sort of tales to *us*.'

'Dear lady, but you yourself——' said I, a little sore and wishing to retaliate if I could.

'I am getting on for a hundred,' said my Old Lady severely; 'things have become very equal to me. I know good and evil in a way none of you young ones can do. It doesn't affect me nowadays. I know how bad some things are, and I know at the baddest there is far more good than ill in the world. Yes, yes. Shake your head, my dear. *You* know better, don't you? You think it 's amiable of me and innocent and all that. You think if I knew the world as well as you do——'

'No, dear madam,' I said. 'No, no; I am not so silly as that.' But yet she was quite right. I was quite as silly. I thought to myself, though I disowned the thought, that she was an old dear, and that people threw dust in her eyes, and that she didn't know half as well as I. I grieved for my own superior enlightenment, but I was sure of it all the time. And all the time my Old Lady looked at me and saw through and through me with those keen old eyes of hers and laughed at me to my face.

'There is that poor lady of the *Heavenly*

Twins,' she said, 'all her argument is just this. But a touch of genius is a fine thing and corrects theories beautifully. The best character in that book is the wicked husband who keeps his word like a man and a gentleman, which is a great deal more than the woman does. It is perhaps the danger with us old people that we get too tolerant. A great many of the people who are dear to me do very wrong things, but it makes no difference in my feeling towards them. It is not what one calls forgiving. I think sometimes that it makes me understand how at the last——'

She looked away over the valley, and said no more; until after a minute or two her voice, which had become a little husky, came out quite clearly. 'I like that house among the trees, where you see the roofs only—no, not the others that stand up and grin at you across the coombe—that one with the roofs. It is just a suggestion of a kindly neighbour and no more. Who are they and what are they? Girls? or boys?'

'That was one,' I said demurely, 'that pretty girl you saw yesterday.'

'Nice little girl,' said my old friend approvingly, 'like the morning in her pretty blouse. I like the blouses. They are like those pretty print shortgowns the country girls in Scotland used to wear—don't you remember? A fashion risen from below to above—which is delightful once in a way—instead of going down all smirched and stained as so many things do, from above to below.'

'She came,' said I, still more demurely, awaiting the effect I hoped to make, 'to ask us to go over there to tea in the birch wood.' My Old Lady gave an assenting nod of the head. I knew she had liked the looks of the girl. 'She came over,' I said, prolonging the moment, 'on her bicycle.' My Old Lady threw up her hands with a little cry and then she laughed.

'You are mischievous,' she said, 'you have caught me in a trap.'

'It 's a long walk,' I said humbly, round the coombe.'

'Walking is very good for girls,' said my old friend quickly. 'It gives them exercise and it gives them time to think. I saw the child looked a little tired and flustered,

and she took no notice of me when she came in.'

'She was afraid of you, dear madam,' said I, meaning everything that was foolish and affectionate. At which my Old Lady, though her knees were a little stiff and she got up with difficulty, almost sprang from her seat and clapped her hands with indignation.

'Afraid—of me? What is there in me that a girl should be afraid of? Do I look like a witch, or a bad fairy?' Then she nodded her head a great many times and began to walk about the lawn. 'There is something rotten in the state, my dear, when the young are afraid of the old.'

I hurried after her, full of excuses, though after the manner in which the first had been received I was a little doubtful what to say. However, she settled the question for herself before I managed to get out anything, and broke into a laugh.

'Better that,' she said, 'a great deal better, my dear, than the kind way in which they generally instruct me and tell me what to like and how to form my poor opinion. Yes, yes, you are just the same as the rest. There are

a great many things you would like to teach me. If only I had time to learn! Forty years or so hence I shall, if I remember, peep down upon you from some hole in the clouds to see how *you* like it. And I hope I shall have the good feeling not to laugh. Now I 'll go in and let you have your croquet,' she said.

VI

The end of my old friend's visit was now drawing near, and we had with regret to make arrangements for speeding the parting guest, as it is the duty of a host to do. The first touch of frost had come upon us; a few trees showed the mark of the fiery fringe, especially the beeches, which waved yellow locks at us on the opening which our last clearing had made. When we represented to my Old Lady that she might yet postpone her departure for a little, she pointed to these evidences of the waning season. 'My dear,' she said, 'look there: there is one of nature's little flags going up. The summer is well on, and that season is beginning which civilised man, and especially women, and most especially old women, should spend in town.'

'You like it, I believe,' I said: 'you prefer your little pok—I mean your house in London, to all the freedom of the country.'

'Yes, I prefer my little poky house,' said my old friend. 'Always finish, my dear, a sentence you have begun. I know it is a poky little house, and the curtains and carpets are not so fresh as I could wish; but it is comfortable to go back to it. There are hundreds of lights about. I get my newspapers in the evening, and a great many posts a day, and all the books are within reach. When the nights get long and wintry the sensation of the great darkness and silence all about in the country gets on my nerves; and then you know I have several other visits to make before I can settle down comfortably at home.'

'You are very hard-hearted,' said I, 'with your "other visits," as if we, whom I supposed you liked, were just one of a multitude you had to work through.'

'There is something in that,' she said with a laugh. 'It is an inscrutable thing, my dear, this system of visits. There was nothing like it in my time. Oh yes, we asked our friends,

but we never thought of a miscellaneous crowd coming and going like people at a hotel, with a housekeeper's book, and all their dates and the rooms they were to have carefully put down.'

'It is necessary, dear lady,' said I.

'The system is not necessary, my dear. I had a little onslaught made on me the other day by a vivacious little French person on that subject: "Figurez-vous," she said, "when they invite you, they tell you when you are to go away."'

'Dear lady, it is necessary,' I murmured again.

'I repeat, the system is not necessary,' cried my Old Lady a little sharply. 'I am going for three days where I don't want to go, and where the people of the house don't want me; and it's out of my way, and a great deal of trouble, not to me only, which could be borne, but to my maid, which is much more serious.'

'But, dear madam, why, then, do you go?' said I.

'Ay, that's the question!' she said, with a laugh. 'This system of visits impresses the French very much, do you know. There is a

magnificence about the idea to them of a great house full of people, and horses to ride, and carriages to drive in for all the guests. "It must cost so much,' a lady once said to me with bated breath. Now they have adopted it themselves after a fashion, and according to Gyp—if she knows what she is talking about —make the funniest arrangements. You don't read Gyp? Well, my dear, perhaps it is as well. You lose a great deal of amusement, but perhaps——'

'I don't happen to have read the particular Gyp you refer to,' said I, with indignation, annoyed, I must say, that I should be supposed not to read a book because—for the usual reasons, I mean, which make many French novels inadmissible on the drawing-room table; but, to be sure, that is an idea that is quite exploded nowadays.

'I was going to say,' answered my Old Lady, 'that you would also be spared a pang. I was passing through her district once, and I had the greatest mind in the world to call upon her and say, "My dear, you are delightful; you are the gayest, the wittest, the most enchanting creature; but why, oh! why, will you

always gather that handful of nastiness and fling it in our faces at the end? And there is no need for it; and it's not your forte at all." She would have laughed in my face probably, and told me she didn't write for old ladies. But here is my woman to tell me my cab has come.'

'Your cab!' I cried, and now I really was indignant. Fancy letting my old friend, a person whom we delighted to honour, go away from one's door in a cab! But all her paraphernalia was already placed in the respectable vehicle, and I recognised that it was impossible now to think of displacing it. Such a paraphernalia it was! Her clock, her cushions covered in shiny black satin, one an air cushion, the other down; her little bag with her book, her paper-knife and her book-marker, her fan, her flask of lavender-water, two pairs of gloves, several handkerchiefs—I cannot tell you half of it; then her folding footstool, her wrap for her knees, her large veil to tie over her bonnet, her big dust clock. There seemed about a hundred accessories more which I could not count, and the biggest and most indispensable of all, her maid, a substantial, silent, altogether trust-

worthy person, waiting to tuck her in with all her little comforts round her. But the sight of all this increased my annoyance. 'The carriage was ordered for you,' I said, aggrieved, 'and the cart for your luggage. To think of your driving off like this from my house, with such a turn-out and such a horse!' I lowered my voice, for of course I did not wish the respectable Burton, to whom we are often obliged to have recourse ourselves, to hear my disparaging remarks and to be wounded in his feelings. My old friend took a few steps round to look at her equipage, and laughed a little.

'Don't say a word against the horse. I have a great weakness for the cab-horse. He never runs away, never rears up on his hind legs, never dances about like your Princes and your Pollies do. "There is no vice in them, ma'am," says your coachman, "it's only his spirit"; or "It's only his nerves," when he shies. I love a horse that has no nerves and has no time to consider whether he is in high spirits or not. It is more satisfactory for an old woman. Your fine gentlemen in the stable give me a series of little frights all the

way. What a good thing for us who have no stables to find such comfort in a good old jog-trot cab-horse. I always feel this warmly after I have left a horsey house. Now, my dear, good-bye. You 've been very good to me, and it will be a pleasure to look forward to seeing you again in town.'

'That is a pretty way of putting it,' said I; 'you are not the least sorry to go away.'

'My dear,' said my Old Lady, 'you will say to yourself after dinner to-night, "She was really a good old soul, but on the whole it is a comfort to have the use of one's nicest sofa to oneself, for she had a way of taking possession and spreading her things all around her. She had now, hadn't she? though I am so fond of her." Well, if you don't say that, my dears, you will look at each other and laugh.'

'I wonder you can say so,' cried I; but the master of the house said nothing in his wise way, which always turns out the best in the end, and we watched her drive away, waving her hand to us, as her fly, piled high with luggage, and her maid's motionless countenance facing her from the back seat, disappeared down the avenue.

After dinner, as I and my companion sat alone, we both felt the truth of what she had said to some degree. We are delighted with our friend's visit, and then it is another little pleasure when we are alone together again. But she was not quite right either, for it was a real regret to us that our dear Old Lady's visit had come to an end.

LOYALTY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MR. CHARLES VERNON.
MRS. CHARLES VERNON.
MAUDIE, *their little girl.*
MRS. FERGUSSON, *a widow.*
JEANIE, *Mrs. Fergusson's old maid.*
A FOOTMAN.

ACT I.

SCENE: MRS. VERNON'S *boudoir.* TIME: *Ten* P.M. MRS. VERNON *is lying on the sofa.*

MRS. V. It is too dreary lying here like this while every one else is amusing themselves. I wonder when Madge will come up to tell me all the news. I don't know what I should do without her. Charlie out all day. I don't think he cares for me now at all. Why he went down to dinner without me as cheerfully as possible, never so much as kissing me. A few years ago he would have been broken-hearted at leaving me upstairs alone. Now I dare say he 's laughing

as merrily as any one. Oh, how different husbands are to lovers. I can't stop here alone any longer. I *shall* have Maudie down to amuse me. [*Strikes bell.*] Nurse will be furious. The children are mine, not hers, I suppose. I shall do as I like with them. [*Enter Servant.*] Tell Miss Maudie to come down. I heard her chattering half-an-hour ago, so I know she is not asleep.

Enter MAUDIE *in dressing-gown and slippers, rubbing her eyes.*

MAUDIE. Do you want me, Mummie, to play with 'oo. I am very sleepy, and nurse says I oughtn't to be sent for like this.

MRS. V. Then nurse is very impertinent to make such remarks. Are you sleepy, my pet? Mummie is very lonely, and wants to be amused.

MAUDIE. Shall I tell 'oo a story, Mummie? Or would you rather play at dolls? But where's Auntie Madge? She generally plays with 'oo.

MRS. V. There's a large dinner-party downstairs, and Mrs. Fergusson is giving the people their dinner, because I'm too tired to go down.

MAUDIE. Is Auntie Madge never tired, Mummie?

MRS. V. No, dear. She's as strong as a horse, and has such good spirits always.

MAUDIE. Yes, she is a very good spirit, almost as good as a fairy, indeed kipe as good, because you can see her, and she's always helping everybody.

MRS. V. That's true, Maudie dear. Do you love her very much, then?

MAUDIE. I love her better than anybody in all the world [*stops and says slowly*]—except 'oo, 'cos of course you're my mother.

MRS. V. And daddy, Maudie, we love him best of all, darling.

MAUDIE. No, I don't. I love Auntie Madge far better than daddy, 'cos he's always in a hurry, and can't dress dolls nor do any really useful thing.

Enter MADGE FERGUSSON, *full evening dress. Goes up to* CARRY VERNON *and kisses her fondly. Child rushes to her and clings to her all the time.*

MRS. F. O Carry, it is sad to see you lying there like that. It has been such a merry evening, too. Every one at their best, every-

one witty and amusing; it never was dull for a moment.

MRS. V. It 's just like my bad luck to miss it. Most of the dinners *I* go to are as dull as a London fog.

MRS. F. I didn't catch the right names of everybody. At least I 'm sure I didn't fit them on to the right people—but it really doesn't matter. Oh, my dear! that new American friend of your husband's, the well-known author, is too delightful for anything. More English in his ways than any Englishman I ever knew, and making the most deliciously clever and witty remarks with the gravest possible face. Half the people didn't see the point of his stories; they, of course, laughed much the most.

MRS. V. How was Polly Delamere looking?

MRS. F. Oh! so young and pretty and divinely dressed, as usual.

MRS. V. I dare say she was awfully made up, but *you* never see those things, and I wonder who paid for her dress!

MRS. F. Don't say nasty things, Carry. It isn't like you! Why, Polly's husband doesn't think gold good enough for her to walk on.

MRS. V. Neither does Polly. She prefers men's hearts. Who did she sit beside?

MRS. F. She sat between Mr. Vernon and the delightful American.

MRS. V. O Madge! how could you give her the best place at table? A woman like that!

MRS. F. Why, poor Mr. Vernon was obliged to take down old Lady Boredom, and I thought it only fair he should have some one amusing on the other side.

MRS. V. I don't see it. I think you should have put Lady Destrong on the other side. People don't give dinners for pleasure. They would never get on in society if they did. It 's the sternest duty, and there is nothing so difficult as to get them rightly arranged.

MRS. F. I 'm glad, indeed, I don't ask people out of duty. If it is not a pleasure to see them I think it 's absolutely mean to ask them into your house.

MRS. V. Madge, don't be ridiculous. Who *did* Lady Destrong sit beside?

MRS. F. Captain Beauchamp. It was really splendid to see them together. Neither of them understood a word the other said. They had not an idea in common. She

raved on about all sorts of Emancipations, smashing down every boundary between everybody and everything. To hear her speak one would think the world was chaos now, and she had got to put it all right and tidy in a week. I longed to tell the whole table how each of them had spent the day yesterday.

MRS. V. How do *you* know? What *were* they doing?

MRS. F. The philanthropic lady was driving in a well-appointed brougham, with a hot bottle and warm rugs, with fur-caped servants, to make a speech at some hall or other against some one or other, and in favour of some pet union or other, with a well-selected reporter beside her; while the self-indulgent Guardsman was serving out dinners to hungry children, with a very sweet, boyish smile on his face, and a joke and cheery word for every poor man that came in. He had to walk home, for he had given away every shilling in his pocket.

MRS. V. O Madge! I should never have believed *that* of Captain Beauchamp. He looks so different.

MRS. F. So do lots of people 'look so different.'

Enter VERNON.

VERNON. I thought those people were never going; it seemed as if they meant to sit on for ever.

MRS. V. Why, Madge just said it was so amusing! but I suppose, poor darling, you missed me, as you naturally would, and it 's very sweet of you to have been dull because *I* was not there. [MADGE *goes out with child.*

MRS. V. Charlie, you never kissed me, nor said a word to me, since you came in. You 're too unkind, and not half so attentive as you used to be. Do you know you haven't brought me any flowers this week, not one?

VERNON. Well! You threw away the last I brought you, because you didn't like the colour. That 's not encouraging for me, you know, and not good for the carpet.

MRS. V. You wouldn't have answered like that seven years ago. Oh, how different you were then! A real lover.

VERNON. Now, my dear child, do try and be sensible. If I were to do now as I did seven years ago, we should be walking hand

in hand beside an Italian lake, doing nothing but spoon each other, and then, pray, where would my practice be? And your comforts? And the children? And the bills?

MRS. V. But you would be my lover still, and I should not mind anything else. You would be thinking of me and of me only, and how to please me and wait on me. It does make me so unhappy to see you so much taken up with business and other things and making me quite a secondary object.

VERNON. Don't you fret, dear, it's all right. [*Looks at watch.*] Bless me! It's eleven o'clock. I'll just go and have one pipe before I turn in. [*Is going off.*]

MRS. V. Charlie, this is too cruel, leaving me like that without a single kiss, without a loving word.

[VERNON *comes back and kisses her hastily.*]

VERNON. Well, I'm not going to Australia, and I shall be back in rather less than ten minutes I suppose. [*Exit* VERNON.

MRS. V. I wonder if all men change, like Charlie, after they have been married some

years? Women don't. I love my husband more and more. I think he loves me less and less. I hate the way he talks to other women, and since I've been ill I don't know what may have been going on.

Enter MRS. F. MRS. VERNON *stretches out her hand to her. She takes it and sits down beside her holding it affectionately.*

MRS. F. Carry, I wonder what my life would be like now without you and those dear chicks to love and to bring brightness and interest to a lonely woman like me.

MRS. V. Why, you bring the sunshine with *you* every time you come, you dear old thing, and if you find brightness here I'm sure you make it; the house is dull enough in all conscience when you're not in it, a sickly, useless woman like me, always ailing, and Charlie always out at what he's pleased to call his business, though I think it is far more likely to be his pleasure.

MRS. F. Why, not a month ago, when we were all in Paris, you were on your feet all day, and ready for any kind of lark in the evening besides, and you never seemed tired then.

MRS. V. No, that was because I was happy and amused—I think it was almost the pleasantest time in my life. Charlie was always ready to go out with us everywhere, even shopping. He was just as sweet and nice as ever he could be, and then I had you as well. Oh, it was a happy time. Heigho! How different it is always now.

MRS. F. Now, Carry, stop, don't be silly and ungrateful. Do you know what I admired and liked most when we were in Paris? It was your husband's devoted attention to you, and his constant desire that you should have a real good time all round. You ought to be a very happy and a very grateful little woman, Carry; a kind husband, a comfortable home, and three lovely children.

MRS. V. I don't see it. Look now how he is, out all day—tired in the evening, and sometimes he even speaks quite crossly to me when he comes in.

MRS. F. Oh, you spoilt child. Does he really? I can hardly believe anything so dreadful! But I quite agree with you in one thing. That month in Paris was perfect. I never was so much made of in my life and never

enjoyed myself so much, thanks to you both. Mine has not been a happy life, dear, as you know, but I think that makes me value love and happiness all the more when I get it.

MRS. V. And I suppose my being an orphan with no brothers and sisters makes me love and cling more to Charlie than most women do to their husbands. Till I knew you, Madge, I never really cared for any one but him and the children, and now I don't know what I should do without you.

MRS. F. Oh how sweet it is of you to have opened your heart to let in a stranger like me. I will never prove ungrateful and unworthy of your love, dear.

Enter VERNON.

VERNON. Hullo, little lady, don't you think you ought to be in bed? It's very late for invalids to be up.

MRS. F. It's my fault, Mr. Vernon. We have been gossiping here about Paris and its delights, and all sorts of things, but you're quite right, Carry ought to have been in bed long since. Very selfish of me to have kept her up so late. Come away,

dearie, I 'll just take you to your room, and then go home myself.

Mrs. V. Charlie, why don't you come and help me up?

[Vernon *helps her, and she goes to her room with* Madge. Vernon *goes as far as the door.*]

Vernon. Good-night, sleep well, and wake up fresh in the morning. [Mrs. F. *and* Mrs. V. *go off.*

Vernon. Madge selfish! Then what are the rest of us I should like to know.

Mrs. F. If you 'll help me on with my cloak I 'll say good-night also and take my departure, Mr. Vernon.

Vernon. First just let me ask if your carriage is here. [*Exit* Vernon.

Mrs. F. Poor Carry! How she persists in shutting her eyes to the blessings that surround her. Was there ever a woman with so much in life to make her happy, and yet who managed to get so much unhappiness out of it.

Enter Vernon.

Vernon. Your carriage has not come, Mrs. Fergusson, but it 's quite early yet; do spare

me a minute or two for a little chat, I so seldom have a chance to talk to you.

MRS. F. It's very strange, my people are generally so punctual, but I may have made some mistake and I 'll just wait ten minutes and see if they turn up.

[VERNON *places chairs and they sit down.*]

VERNON. Are you *ever* out of spirits or cross, Mrs. Fergusson, I wonder.

MRS. F. Oh, both very often, I dare say. But I think real sorrow has a great tendency to prevent what is generally called low spirits, which are often the result of indigestion and oftener still of mere idleness.

VERNON. If that 's true, I don't wonder you are always cheerful, for any one less idle I never saw.

MRS. F. Nonsense, how can any one be anything but cheerful just after such a delightful evening as we have had ?

VERNON. Well, if it was delightful, I know who made it so. But I think you find pleasure in everything and everybody. I have never seen you look bored since I have known you.

MRS. F. I never feel bored so I don't see

why I should look it, and I do enjoy everybody and everything. I fancy that 's often the case with people who have had anxious lives all their youth, and then in middle life there comes a calm. They get a sort of Indian summer of happiness and enjoyment which perhaps is best, for they know how to value it, knowing what the other sort of life is like.

VERNON. I don't like to hear you speak with that vein of sadness running through what you say. It 's unlike you, and yet I don't know that it is either.

MRS. F. I sometimes wonder, Mr. Vernon, whether there is most pleasure or pain in living quite alone, and in being free to come and go as you like—no one caring about you—though of course lots of people are as kind as possible. But one knows and feels that one has no real place in any home except by one's own lonely fireside, and no first place in any heart at all. But I beg your pardon for talking like that, it 's horrid of me, and in this house too, where I receive constantly every sort of kindness and love.

VERNON. Yes indeed, every sort of love, but

the kindness is all given by you, not received. [*Clock strikes twelve.* MADGE *jumps up.*]

MRS. F. Twelve o'clock! I must go home at once, or those dear old domineering servants of mine will think I 'm killed, and I should find myself being advertised for before I knew I was lost! Mr. Vernon, if those stupid people of mine haven't come, will you kindly send for a hansom, for I can't wait any longer. [*Puts on cloak.*]

VERNON. You must wait a little longer. Oh, I implore you wait. Mrs. Fergusson—Madge—don't you see—don't you feel what I must say to you? I know I 'm a fool, but I can't help it. I know I 'm risking everything, but I must tell you how I love you. But you can't need telling, you must have seen it for yourself, however carefully I have tried to hide it. Not first in any one's heart, and where are you in mine? Don't you know what you are to me? Simply the most perfect woman in the world. How can I see you here day after day and not see how different you are from every one else! How unselfish, how helpful, how kind!

Oh, for mercy's sake, you who are so good to all, be good to me now, say one word to show that I count for something in your life.

[MADGE *has stood horror-struck and paralysed during this speech till* VERNON *puts his hand on her arm, when she shakes it off with disgust and walks to the other side of the stage.*]

MRS. F. You surely have taken too much wine before you could so far forget yourself and me as to speak as you have done, Mr. Vernon. You have not only insulted me, but wronged most deeply one whom I love far better than myself.

[VERNON *has got between* MRS. F. *and the door.*]

MRS. F. Let me pass, sir.

VERNON. No, I will not let you go like this. I am not drunk, and you know it. It is true I have been carried away beyond my own control to speak to you as I ought not to have done, to say things that are better left unsaid. But what does it matter, when I must feel them all my life, and if you cannot return my love, at least let things go on as before.

MRS. F. 'As before.' Was ever anything in this world 'as before.' How can it be? How can I go and come as I have done in your house? How can I, Madge Fergusson, have a secret understanding with another woman's husband? My God! What have I done to deserve this? It would be intolerable. No, it cannot be.

VERNON. Then if you will have no mercy on me, have mercy on my wife. What explanation can you make to Carry? She who is so helpless, so dependent on you, and so blameless?

MRS. F. Poor Carry!

[*She walks up and down,* VERNON *watching her.*]

Her health, perhaps her life, depends on quiet and peace. The doctor said so. Oh, what is right? What ought I to do? [*Turns to* VERNON.]

For the sake of the wife who loves you so exceedingly, and for the sake of the children whose happiness and welfare depend on her life, I will consent to keep secret your insane folly of this evening, and allow things to go on 'as before.' With this

difference, and on this condition, that you never come to my house unaccompanied by your wife, and that you never expose me to being alone with you in your own.

[VERNON *bows silently.*]

Enter FOOTMAN.

FOOTMAN. If you please, ma'am, your coachman says the carriage has been more than an hour at the door, and he is afraid the horses will get cold.

[MRS. F. *looks at* VERNON *contemptuously, who turns away his head.* MRS. VERNON'S *voice from inner room.*]

MRS. V. Charlie, who are you talking to? Are you not coming?

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

[SCENE: *Morning, a month later,* MRS. FERGUSSON'S *drawing-room.* JEANIE *putting table in order.*]

JEANIE. Always the same, since ever I knew her, and that 's more than thirty years now! The bonniest, blithest bairn of them all, the flower of the flock, aye ready to do what

the others wanted. The best wife to the most worthless man. Guid forgie me for wayin' so, and him dead and gone—the kindest dochter the world ever saw, and now she 's left her lane; she 's just slavin' herself to death for them that 's no' a drop 's bluid to her, and naebody to love her and bide wi' her worth the namin' but me. But the Lord be praised, I 'm a power in mysel' and I 'll keep her richt if I can, and I can do maist things that I gie my mind to.

Enter Mrs. Fergusson.

Mrs. F. Now Jeanie, Jeanie dear, what are you doing? Tidying away my things till there 's nothing to be found in its right place.

Jeanie. Aweel, mem, it 's ill your pairt to speak to me like that, me that 's just spent a' my days tidying after you, and it 's well there 's some one to take care o' you for it 's little enough care you take o' yoursel', stravaiging after that Mrs. Vernon and her bairns day and nicht. Why, ye look fair washed out this mornin', wi' black rings round your eyes, just for all the world as if they were mourning for the bonny colour that 's left your cheeks.

MRS. F. But Mrs. Vernon 's better now, Jeanie, and up and about again, so I shall not be sitting up any more. Don't you worry about what 's over.

JEANIE. I dinna see much 'over' aboot it. You 're aye doin' something for her, whether she be up or down. A petted, useless thing, I call her.

MRS. F. You mustn't speak like that, Jeanie, remember how ill she has been and how much I love her.

JEANIE. Aweel, the iller she is, the mair need she has to take heed to her ways, and not be keepin' one like you rinnin' to and fro for her whims and her vagaries, as if she were the queen and you were but naebody.

MRS. F. She 's very weak yet and that makes her irritable; it 's not like you, Jeanie, to speak so unkindly of any one that 's ailing.

JEANIE. If she were real ill and in her bed now, and not like to leeve, I 'm no sayin' that I wad be against you just givin' her a helpin' han' to pass away quietly-like, but I canna 'bide to see you puttin' up wi' airs and graces, and you a Douglas born and bred—forbye bein' married on a Fergusson

—not that he was much to crack on, poor body—but her, she 's fit enough to be aboot an' takin' her pleasure whinin' all the time like a sick puppy dog while you do all the wark, and take all the fash o' the bairns wi' a bright smile on your bonny face an' never a murmur on your lips.

MRS. F. O Jeanie, you very well know the bairns are no 'fash' to me; they 're just an endless joy and delight.

JEANIE. Puir childless leddy! Bury a flower ever so deep in withered leaves, you 'll howk it out and make a sweet posy o't.

MRS. F. However, I 've something to tell you, Jeanie, to-day that will relieve your anxiety about me. I 've seen Doctor Samson, and he says Mrs. Vernon ought to be left more to depend on herself and not to be so much waited on and amused continually.

JEANIE. Honest man! It 's a real pleasure to hear of a doctor givin' sensible advice to any one. Why, it 's almost as guid as I could ha' gi'en you mysel'.

MRS. F. But I 'm going to take the advice, that 's the real wonder, and I 'm going to write a note at once to Mrs. Vernon, telling

her that I shall be busy at home all this morning and out of town all this afternoon.

JEANIE. It 'll no' be me that will delay the sendin' o' that letter.

[JEANIE *goes off*, MRS. F. *sits down to table and writes.*]

MRS. F. Something must be done about Carry, since her illness she has quite changed.

Enter JEANIE.

JEANIE. John 's quite ready, ma'am.

MRS. F. And the note is ready too, you dear, troublesome, faithful old Jeanie.

JEANIE. [*Going out.*] And in ten minutes yon feckless, selfish little English body shall have it in her han', and see what she 'll make o' hersel' without my bonny leddy to help her through the day. [*Exit* JEANIE.

MRS. F. I 'm worried and anxious about Carry, she 's not a bit like what she used to be; her nerves seem in a most excited state, I never saw any one so exacting and petulant; she hates my being out of her sight and yet she doesn't seem happy when I 'm with her, and she exacts an account of every moment of my time spent away from her, which would be ludicrous, if it were not so painful.

Perhaps she 's had too untroubled a life to value happiness properly. There 's no doubt sorrow is a very useful tonic, but I don't think Carry could stand much of that either. Oh, if one has suffered much oneself, how one does long to keep suffering away from other people.

[JEANIE *announces* MR. VERNON.]

JEANIE. Now we ha' got rid o' her, he comes; it 's ill gettin' rid o' a bad sixpence.

[*Exit* JEANIE.

MRS. F. Mr. Vernon, this visit is a surprise, and not a pleasant one. Unless, indeed, there is something very serious the matter at home [*he shakes his head*], you have no excuse for not keeping your word, and breaking the compact made between us a month ago.

VERNON. I never gave my word, Mrs. Fergusson, you exacted a tacit pledge from me which I have honestly done my best to keep in spite of temptation, which you either don't understand or for which you make no allowance. All these weeks I have seen you like a patient angel of a sick-room taking care of my children, as no one ever took care of them before. Bearing every caprice

till it has become actual rudeness without a cloud on your brow or an answer on your lips, except indeed the sweet one that turns away wrath—I have seen all this and never attempted to thank you or speak to you, but I am a man and not a stone, and I can not and will not go on being silent any longer. For pity's sake, Madge, say one kind word to me. Don't send me away with scorn, for I love and honour you with my whole heart and soul.

Mrs. F. Mr. Vernon, I have let you speak on because my mind was making itself up to the only course you have left open to me. I cannot betray you to your wife, for she loves you so truly, and it would break her poor heart to know what you have said. But I can and will go away from London at once. I will break up my little home, the first place where I have known peace and happiness since I was a little child. Your fault must make me a wanderer again and separate me for ever from the woman and children I love so dearly—oh so dearly. I must begin life again among new surroundings. I can forgive you, Mr. Vernon,

for it 's always easier for the injured than the injurer to forgive, but can you forgive yourself the unhappiness you have wrought?

VERNON. Mrs. Fergusson, think what you 're saying, think what you propose to do—you cannot mean to be so hard to me, you, who are so soft and gentle to others; is it my fault that I cannot help loving you, is it not rather my terrible misfortune since you cannot return it? No, I will not call it that. It can never be a real misfortune to any man to love a good woman like you.

MRS. F. It must always be a misfortune to a man to act disloyally to a woman who adores him as Carry does you. It must always be a misfortune to a man to have so little control over himself as to speak to a woman as you have done to me. And what do you think it would be to the woman who yielded to him? You propose to yourself a pleasure, a conquest, a thing perhaps to brag of, certainly to plume yourself upon. What do you propose to *her*? Shame, humiliation. While it lasted, a degrading passion. When it died out, an abominable memory. To gratify yourself for the

moment—do not interrupt me. If that moment was a year—if it was a lifetime—what does it matter—you would make of her a thing that could never look another woman in the face—never trust a man more—a creature whom the world would despise—if it knew—who would know and who would despise Herself, which is the worst scorn of all.

VERNON. O Madge, be merciful! I will never offend you by speaking again. I will school myself to silence, to behave as you would wish in all ways, only I beseech you, don't make my punishment greater than I can bear by breaking up your home and going away. It would be terrible to bring only unhappiness to the woman I love so unutterably.

MRS. F. You would not be the first, nor, I fear, the last man whose love has brought sorrow and desolation to a woman.

VERNON. But not to you, Mrs. Fergusson, not to you, for you have done nothing to deserve or provoke such a punishment.

MRS. F. Neither you nor I, Mr. Vernon, have to decide what punishment is deserved and what is not.

[*She bends her head on the mantelpiece.*]
Enter unannounced MRS. VERNON.

MRS. V. Just what I expected! So this is the engagement that was to keep you at home all the morning, and pray where are you going together this afternoon?

MRS. F. Carry, are you mad? Do you know what you 're saying?

MRS. V. Yes, I know very well what I 'm saying, and what I 've been feeling all these miserable weeks. Do you suppose I 'm blind and stupid that I haven't noticed how Charlie has avoided you and you have avoided Charlie. Of course because you had something to conceal, and dare not speak before me, the friend and wife you had betrayed.

MRS. F. Take care, take care, Carry, you 're going too far. [*She stops suddenly and says to herself, aside:*] God help me to keep the truth from her! It would kill her!

MRS. V. [*Turning round to* MR. V.] This is the business that keeps you away from home so late, and takes you away from home so early.

VERNON. You are utterly mistaken in all your assumptions. You are speaking of a lady

who deserves nothing from you but gratitude and respect.

MRS. V. Gratitude for showing me the real worth of your pretended affection! Respect for her superior age, I suppose!

VERNON. Have you so entirely forgotten all you owe her as to speak to her as you are doing?

MRS. V. You have, no doubt, paid those debts for me with interest.

VERNON. It is no use speaking to you while you are in such a state of excitement. You will not listen to reason.

MRS. V. There is no reason to listen to what can only be a tissue of falsehoods.

VERNON. If your own pride and delicacy do not prevent your speaking in this way, no words of mine would be of any avail.

MRS. V. No. Words are indeed useless—where facts are so plain. I have been living in a fool's paradise for years. I have no doubt Mrs. Fergusson is not the first. The scales have fallen from my eyes and I see clearly now the meaning of your 'business' engagements. Oh! How can I have been so silly as to believe in you for so long

when, I dare say, every friend I have has been laughing at me all the time you have been amusing yourself.

MRS. F. [*To* MRS. V.] Say nothing to your husband, Carry, that you will ever regret later another woman should have heard.

MRS. V. I am not likely to say much of any kind, madam, to the husband who has played me false with another woman, and still less to the partner in his guilt. I leave my husband's house for ever to-morrow.

VERNON. Unsay those shameful words, Carry, they are false, utterly, shamelessly false, you must indeed be mad before you could utter them.

[CARRY *sinks into a chair sobbing.*]

MRS. F. Leave his house for ever, and the children, the deserted home. Her broken heart, what shall I do to put it right? I am but one, and if I suffer I suffer alone, and I am so used to suffering that a little more or less does not matter; and what is my humiliation to the ruin of a happy home, a dishonoured hearth, and the blighted lives of those three little babies! I have no choice left! [*Turns round to* CARRY *stretch-*

ing out her hands.] Forgive me, dear, when you can—after some time—when you will have seen again how tender and loving your husband will be to you, for do not deceive yourself, he loves you very dearly. It has all been my fault, Carry, all my fault. Pity me, dear, if you can't forgive me, for I do love you and the children very, very deeply. But don't blame your husband, dear; he is true and faithful to you, and I—only I—am to blame, it's all my fault. I'll go away to-morrow and never trouble your life again. [*She goes up to* CARRY *and kisses the top of her head, and looking steadfastly at* VERNON, *she says:*] He will be more tender to you than ever to make up for what you have suffered. I know he will.

VERNON. [*Bowing low.*] I will.

[MRS. F. *goes out, looks back from door.* MRS. VERNON, *stretching out her hand, says:*]

MRS. V. Charlie, forgive me for doubting you.

[VERNON, *whose head is buried on the mantelpiece, puts out a hand towards her.*]

CURTAIN.

MADAM

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Reginald Trevanion, *a Cornish squire, old and ill.*

John Trevanion, *his brother.*

Roland Hamerton, *a young country squire.*

Rex, *Reginald Trevanion's son, at Eton in Act I. and II., seventeen years old in Act III.*

Dr. Beaton, *a Scots doctor.*

Edmund Everard, *Madam Trevanion's son.*

Dorrington, *man-servant.*

Blake, *a lawyer.*

Charlie Blake, *his son.*

Madam Trevanion, *wife of Reginald Trevanion.*

Aunt Sophia, *sister to Reginald and John Trevanion.*

Rosalind, *Trevanion's daughter by his first wife.*

Sophy,
Amy, } *Trevanion's daughters by his second wife.*

Russell, *old nurse.*

Jane, *Madam Trevanion's maid.*

Act I.

Scene : *Drawing-room at Highcourt. Large window with recess.*

[Dorrington *is arranging lamps and putting out card-table, etc.*]

Dor. If everything isn't in its exact place, if the fire isn't the exact heat he wants, shan't we have a break-out? I never, never did see such a temper in my life! He's no more reason than a lunatic. Poor, poor Madam. I'm sure if ever a lady was to be pitied, it's her. The way he goes on at her, and never a word nor an answer out of her lips. I never saw the like of it. No, never! She has no relations seemingly to take her part. Not but what she carries her head up with the best of them, as proud as proud, she holds her own with the best of the county. For all that, nobody knows where the Squire met her, nor who she was. No, not so much as her maiden name.

[*Enter* Russell.]

Russell. Have you seen Miss Trevanion, Mr. Dorrington?

DOR. No, Mrs. Russell. Is there anything wrong in the nursery?

RUSSELL. No. It's not in the nursery that things are wrong. It's in other quarters! Where's Madam?

DOR. I don't know. I thought she went up to the nursery as usual, when the ladies left the dining-room.

RUSSELL. [*Mysteriously.*] Oh! Well, she's not *there*, Mr. Dorrington, nor is she wanted there as far as I know, while I am in charge of the dear children.

DOR. Poor Madam! I'm sure no one will grudge her a little rest and peace wherever she is. She has a hard life of it, anyhow.

RUSSELL. A hard life indeed! Who wanted her here at all? Who ever heard of a Madam Trevanion coming home like that before? Married abroad! No one knowing anything about it till she drove with the squire to the door, and for seventeen years has she been here, and no one knows no more about her than they did that day. But, mark me, Mr. Dorrington, there will be light on her doings soon—you'll see.

DOR. See. I 'll see what I 've always seen since the day she came home. Your jealousy and malice never letting her alone, turning her own children against her. It 's a shame. It 's a cruel shame! I tell you. I believe you 're trying to make mischief between her and the Squire, her that never did harm but good to all, and I 'm sure she has done a wife's duty to him. A slave and a martyr I call her. But there 's one thing, you 'll never turn Miss Rosalind nor Mr. John against her.

RUSSELL. More 's the pity that Miss Rosalind should forget her own dead mamma.

DOR. Rubbish! How can she remember her ma that died when she was born! Hush! They are coming. [*Exit Servants.*

[*Enter* ROSALIND, *looking anxiously round and goes to window. Looks out.*]

ROSALIND. What 's the good! What 's the good!

[*Enter* RUSSELL *from conservatory.*]

RUSSELL. No good at all, Miss Rosalind. Why should you mix yourself up with what 's no concern of yours?

[ROSALIND *starts and is disturbed but constrains herself.*]

ROSALIND. Is it you, Russell? What are you doing here? You will make it impossible for me to do anything for you if you forget your own place.

RUSSELL. I am doing what my betters are doing, Miss Rosalind,—looking out for Madam, just as you are.

ROSALIND. How dare you say such things? I — am looking out to see what sort of night it is. It is very stormy. Go away at once. You have no right to be here.

RUSSELL. I 've been here longer than most folks—longer than them that has the best opinion of themselves; longer than——

ROSALIND. [*Quickly.*] Than *me* perhaps—Yes! I know—you came before I was born; but you know what folly this is. Mother will—[*hesitating*] be very angry if she finds you here.

RUSSELL. I wish, Miss Rosalind, you would have a little more respect for yourself. It goes against me to hear you say mother. And your own dear mamma, that was a

duke's daughter, and that should have been lady of everything——

ROSALIND. Russell, I wish you wouldn't be such a fool! My poor dear little mother died when I was born. Nineteen years ago! And you keep up a grudge like this for so many years.

RUSSELL. And will, whatever you may say, and will till I die, or till one of us——

ROSALIND. Go upstairs at once! What have you to do down here? I don't think you are safe in the house. If I had the power I should send you away—but mamma is too good, too kind, too forgiving.

RUSSELL. Miss Rosalind. You are as cruel—You have no heart. Me, that nursed you and watched over you——

ROSALIND. It is too terrible a price to pay. [*Angrily.*] Go. I will not have you here. If mamma finds you here when she comes downstairs——

RUSSELL. [*Laughs.*] She will ask what *you* are doing standing at an open window in November, Miss Rosalind. It will not be only me she will be angry with. [*Taking her arm.*] What *are* you doing here?

Who 's outside that interests you so much? It interests us both—that 's the truth; only I am the one that knows most.

ROSALIND. [*Pushing her out of the door.*] Go, go. I will not hear another word.

[*Exit* RUSSELL.

O mother, dear mother, what does it all mean? I have looked everywhere for you. You are not in the house! Where are you? If father comes in from the dining-room and misses her, what a scene there will be! He 'll listen to no excuse, bear no contradiction, and he 's so weak, so ill, and excitement is so dangerous. O mother, you are so good, so patient with him, so tender and loving to him always. Oh! Wherever you are, come quick before he misses you.

[*All this has been said with much agitation. On hearing a noise of gentlemen coming through the conservatory she rushes to piano and begins playing unconcernedly.*]

[*Enter in wheel-chair* MR. TREVANION, JOHN TREVANION, DR. BEATON *and* ROLAND HAMERTON. MR. TRE-

VANION *is wheeled beside fire.* JOHN TREVANION *stands with his back to fire.* ROLAND *coming in last, slips by the others to* ROSALIND, *who sits at piano, leaving the others to take their places.*]

ROLAND. At last I have a chance of a word, Rosalind, why are you always running away from me?

ROSALIND. I, running away. Not at all. But you do nothing and I have a hundred things to do.

ROLAND. I would do anything—everything you told me! You know that, but you keep out of my reach for ever. Madam wants you, or the children want you—or—— Rosalind, we have known each other always. Do you think anybody can care for you as I do? and yet you will never give me a chance.

ROSALIND. Yes, we have always known each other—like brother and sister.

ROLAND. Nothing of the sort! You want to drive me wild—like anything but that. Brother and sister! How cruel you are, Rosalind——

ROSALIND. Oh, hush, I want to know what they are saying.

ROLAND. You don't want to know what *I* am saying. They are only saying what they always say—whereas I——

ROSALIND. Are doing precisely the same—oh be quiet, Roland. I know—you shall tell it to me all another day.

[DR. BEATON *sits down at card-table farthest from fire.*]

DR. B. I sit away from the fire on preenciple. Let a room be properly warmed all over—but don't let us bask in the fire like dogs.

MR. T. Rosalind, where 's your mother?

[ROSALIND *springs up.* ROLAND *goes to window and looks out.*]

ROSALIND. [*Quickly.*] Oh! Mamma has gone to the nursery—I suppose.

[UNCLE JOHN *looks at her.*]

MR. T. Now this is a strange thing, that in my own house and in my failing state of health, I cannot secure my own wife's attention at the one moment of the day when she is indispensable to me. The nursery! What is there to do in the nursery? Is not Russell there? If the woman is not fit to be trusted, let her be discharged at once and some one else got.

ROSALIND. There is no doubt about Russell, papa, only one likes to see for oneself.

MR. T. Then why can't she send *you* to see for yourself? This is treatment I 'm not accustomed to. What do I say? Not accustomed to it! I 'm accustomed to be neglected by everybody. A brat of a child who never ailed anything in its life to be watched over, while I, a dying man, must take my chance. I have put up with it for years, always hoping that at last— But the worm will turn, you know; the most patient will break down. If I am to wait night after night for the one amusement, the one little pleasure—such as it is. I appeal to you, doctor.

[*He has said all this rapidly and angrily and stops from utter exhaustion and want of breath.*]

DR. B. [*Taking up the cards.*] My dear sir, we are just enough for our rubber; and as I have often remarked, that though, of course, I bow to the superiority of ladies in most things, whist is altogether a masculine game. Will you cut for the deal?

MR. T. It is what I will not put up with.

Everybody in this house relies on my good nature. I am always the *souffre-douleur*. When a man is too easy he is taken advantage of on all hands. Where 's your mother? No! I mean your step-mother; her blood is not in your veins, thank heaven! Where is she? The nursery? I don't believe about the nursery. She is with some of her low friends.

UNCLE J. Reginald, you are forgetting yourself.

MR. T. Hold your tongue, John. Am I or am I not the person who knows best about my own wife? Where 's Madam?

UNCLE J. Rosalind, go and tell your mother.

[*Exit* ROSALIND. ROLAND *has opened door for her, but she dashes past him. He returns to window.*]

DR. B. [*Who has been playing with the cards.*] Bless me! I wish I had been dealing in earnest; what a bonnie thing for a trump card!

[*Rising he wheels* MR. TREVANION *towards the card-table*].

DR. B. A little farther from the fire, sir. You

are getting overheated: come, sir. Mr. Hamerton will take a hand to begin with, and after the first round another player can cut in.

MR. T. Everything! I took her without a penny or a friend! [*muttering*].

ROLAND. [*At window: starts puts his hand to his head and staring out says to himself*:] Her! And there are *two* figures. It 's impossible! O Madam! What *can* it mean?

MR. T. I married her without a friend. I was a fool for my pains. If any of you think you 'll buy submission by that, you make a confounded mistake. A duke's daughter couldn't stand more by her own way; no, nor look more like a lady. That must be allowed her.

[*Enter* MADAM, *quietly and slowly, smiling at one and all.* ROLAND *stares at her from the window with astonishment. She is followed by* ROSALIND, *who goes up to* ROLAND *in the window seat.*]

Oh—h, so you 've condescended to come at last, Madam, have you?

MADAM. [*Slowly and calmly.*] I am sorry to

be late. Have you not begun your rubber? I knew there were enough without me.

MR. T. There 's never enough without you. You know that as well as I do. If there were twice enough what has that to do with it? You know my play—about the only thing you do know. If a man can't have his wife to make up his game what is the use of a wife at all? And this is not the first time, Madam. Can't you take another time for your nap, or your nursery, or whatever it may be? I don't believe in the nursery. I hear too much from Russell to believe that. It 's something you don't choose to have known, it is some of your low——

MADAM. Rosalind, your father has no footstool, dear. Doctor, there are some fresh cards in the little cabinet.

MR. T. And how the devil can I have my footstool or clean cards or anything I want when you are away? I believe you do it on purpose to set up a right.

[MADAM *is stooping and found footstool —placing it under her husband's feet.*]

MADAM. This is the one that suits you best.

Come, Reginald. If I am the culprit let us lose no more time.

[*He kicks footstool away.*]

Mr. T. Do you think I am going to be smoothed down so easily? Oh yes! as soon as Madam pleases, that is the time for everything. I shall not play. You can amuse yourselves, gentlemen, if you please, now that Mrs. Trevanion has found time to pay a little attention to her guests. Give me those newspapers, Rosalind. Oh! play, play, by all means play! Don't let me interrupt your amusement [*dashes down papers*]. Heaven above! They are not cut. What is that rascal Dorrington here for? A pack of idle servants, encouraged to neglect the master that feeds them! What can you expect? A mistress who is shut up half her time, or out of the way or——

[Madam *has turned away from the card-table and is standing with her back to the audience, and on her train, plainly seen in the bright fire-light, is a long, straggling branch of 'travellers' joy.'*]

Mr. T. What 's that? What 's that?

[*All look.* *The* DOCTOR *over the card-table.* JOHN TREVANION *gravely and sadly.* ROLAND *goes out rapidly into conservatory.* ROSALIND *hurriedly stoops down and begins to disentangle it from the lace.*]

ROSALIND. [*With a forced laugh.*] O mamma, how careless! How horrid of Jane! Here is a thorn that must have caught in your dress the last time you wore it; and she has folded it in your train and never noticed it. Papa is right, the servants are——

MR. T. Hold your tongue, Rose. Let alone! So, Madam, this is why we have to wait for everything, and I—I—the master of the house, am left and neglected. Good Heavens above! Since when does the lady of this house wander in the woods on a November night? With whom, madam? With whom? With whom? Madam, I ask you? Here, gentlemen, you are witnesses; this is more serious than I thought. I knew my wishes were disregarded, that my will was set at naught, that my comforts were neglected; but I

did not think I was betrayed. With whom, Madam? I demand his name.

UNCLE J. Reginald, for God's sake, don't let us have another scene. You may *think* what you please, but *we know* this is all nonsense. Neglected. Why, she makes herself your slave. If the other accusations are as true as that! Doctor, can't you put a stop to it? He'll kill himself—[*slowly*] and her!

MR. T. Her! Oh! She's strong enough. I've had my suspicions before, but I've never uttered them. So, Madam, you thought you were too clever for me. A sick man, unable to stir out of the house, is of course very easy to deceive. But the sick man has his defenders. There are those in this house who have known you and kept me informed of your doings. You throw dust in the eyes of these men—but I know. I know what I took you from. I've known all along what you were capable of. Who was it? Heaven above! Down on your knees and confess his name and how you have deceived me and broken your vow, and tell me his name.

MADAM. So far as the evidence goes, I do not deny it. It has *not* been folded up in my train, my kind Rosalind. I have been out of doors; though the night is not tempting. [*All this is said very quietly, then loud and proudly.*] And what then? [*She smiles faintly and takes the branch out of* ROSALIND'S *hand.*] You see, it is all wet. There is no deception in it. I have been out in the woods in the park. Look! I did not stop even to change my shoes. They are wet too. And what then?

DR. B. One thing, that you must change them directly, before another word is said. That comes in my department, at least. We can't afford to have *you* laid up. Miss Rosalind, take your mamma away, and make her, as we say in Scotland, change her feet.

MR. T. Let her go altogether, if she pleases. I want to see no more of her. What does a woman want in the woods in a winter night. Let her have congestion of the lungs: it will save disgrace in the family. Night after night she has done it. Oh!

She thinks I don't know. She has met him again and again. A low fellow.

[*The* DOCTOR *seizes his arm and pushes him back in the chair.* UNCLE JOHN *starts forward.*]

UNCLE J. If you don't respect your wife, for God's sake think of the girl—your own child! If it were not for their sakes I would not spend another night under this roof.

MR. T. Spend your night where you please. It's nothing to me. No, I don't respect her! I respect nobody that disobeys me. I tell you I 'll turn out that woman. I 'll disgrace her. [ROSALIND *moves towards him pleadingly.*] Get out of the way, Rosalind. You 've forgotten, Madam, what you were when I married you, and now—you turn out on a winter's night to philander in the woods with some——

[*He sinks back fainting. During all this* MADAM *has stood looking at the branch; at the last words she smiles faintly and sadly, till she sees he has fainted, when she throws it down and rushing towards him with the* DOCTOR.]

MADAM. We must get him to bed!

[*The* DOCTOR *feels his pulse, shakes his head.* MADAM *gives him restoratives.*]

MADAM. He is better now. He will be all right.

DR. B. Yes, he is reviving. We will take him to his room. [*Exit* MADAM *and* DOCTOR *wheeling* MR. T.

[UNCLE JOHN *goes up to* ROSALIND *and very sadly speaks.*]

UNCLE J. Rosalind, I think you should go to bed.

ROSALIND. O Uncle John, how can I go to bed? How can any one in this house rest or sleep?

UNCLE J. My dear, I admit that the circumstances are not very cheerful. Still, we shall sleep all the same, no doubt, just as we should sleep if we were all to be executed to-morrow.

ROSALIND. Should we? But not if some one we loved—was to be—executed, as you say.

UNCLE J. Perhaps that might make a little difference, while the condemned man sleeps;

I suppose his mother or his sister are wakeful enough. But there is nothing of that kind in our way, little Rose. Come, it is no worse than usual; go to bed, my darling.

ROSALIND. It is worse than usual. There was never before — oh! [*She clasps her hands and turns away.*]

UNCLE J. My dear, I think it will be best not to discuss the question. If there is something new in it, it will develop soon enough. God forbid! I am little disposed, Rosalind, to think there *is* anything new. [*He pauses and walks up to the table where the thorn branch is lying. Looks at it very sadly and turns to* ROSALIND.] I think it would be good for you to have a little change. Home, of course, is the best place for young girls. Still, all this is a great strain on young nerves. Your Aunt Sophy wants you very much, and I could take you there on my way. I really think it would be the best thing to do. Come! You must not stay here to wear your nerves to fiddle-strings. I *must* take you away.

ROSALIND. [*Looks steadily at him.*] Why at this moment above all others?

UNCLE J. Why? That goes without saying, Rosalind. Your father, to my mind, has never been so outrageous in his behaviour, so bad in health; and your — I mean Madam——

ROSALIND. You mean my mother, Uncle John. [UNCLE J. *shakes his head.*] Well! is she not my mother? I have never known any other. Poor dear little mamma was younger than I am. I never knew her. She is an angel in heaven, and she cannot be jealous of any one on earth. So you think that because papa has never been so ill, and my mother never had so much to bear, it would be the right thing for me, the eldest, the one that can be of any use, to go away.

UNCLE J. She has her own children, Rosalind.

ROSALIND. Yes, to be sure. Rex at Eton, and knows about as much what she needs as the dogs do; and Sophy thirteen, and little darling Amy. You must think very little of Rosalind, uncle, if you think the children can make up for me.

UNCLE J. I think a great deal of Rosalind; but we must be reasonable. I thought a woman's own children were more to her than any one else's. Perhaps I am wrong, but that 's in all the copy-books.

ROSALIND. [*Passionately.*] You want me to believe that I 'm nobody's child, that I have no right to love or any real home in all the world.

UNCLE J. My dear! this is madness! [*Doubtfully.*] There is your father; [*decidedly*] and I hope even *I* count for something. You are the only child I shall ever love [*sadly*] and your Aunt Sophy, for whom, in fact, I am pleading, gives you a sort of adoration.

ROSALIND. [*Springing out of arm-chair, where she has been sitting, clasps* UNCLE JOHN'S *arm and speaks fast and with breaking voice.*] Uncle John, I am very fond of you. You have always been so good and kind; but I am her and she is me. Don't you understand? I have always been with her since I was a little child. Nobody but me has ever seen her cry and break down. I know her all through and through.

I think her thoughts not my own. There are no secrets between us. She does not require even to speak: I know what she means without that. There are no secrets between her and me——

UNCLE J. [*Quickly, pointing to bramble.*] No secrets! No secrets! Rosalind, are you so sure of that—now?

ROSALIND *drops his arm and throws herself beside the sofa sobbing—a pause.*]

My dear little girl, I am talking of no terrible separation. People who are the most devoted to each other, lovers even, have to leave each other sometimes, and pay a little attention to other ties. Your Aunt Sophy is always longing for you. Your father's sister and alone in the world. Has she no claim too?

[ROSALIND *has been getting quieter as he speaks, and stands up and faces him now.*]

ROSALIND. [*Slowly.*] You mean a great deal more. [*He looks at her steadily and sadly.*]

UNCLE J. Yes; I mean more than that. I mean that this house at present is not a comfortable place. *I* feel myself *de trop.*

No sympathy I can show her can counterbalance the pain she must feel in having a witness of your father's abuse——

ROSALIND. [*With surprise.*] Sympathy! I never knew you had sympathy with her. I have always considered you on the other side. O Uncle John, I *am* so thankful.

UNCLE J. Does *she* think me on the other side? Then no wonder she was silent.

[*Enter* DR. BEATON.]

DR. B. Well! We've got him to bed and he seems pretty comfortable now.

ROSALIND. Is papa better, Doctor?

UNCLE J. Is Mrs. Trevanion with my brother?

DR. B. Yes, yes, where should she be but with him? He cannot do without her. [*To* ROSALIND.] My dear young lady, go to bed.

ROSALIND. Do you think that mamma will not want me to-night? Then I will go as you say. But if she wants me——

DR. B. She will not leave your father again.

[*Exit* ROSALIND.

UNCLE J. I gather from what you say that my brother is worse to-night?

DR. B. Going downhill very quickly and the

nearer the bottom the greater the pace. Sometimes the rate at last is terrifying.

UNCLE J. Madam is nursing him as if nothing had happened?

DR. B. Now it is over. He just ignores it and casts himself on her for everything.

UNCLE J. I was thinking of her.

DR. B. Oh! her! that's simple. She is the first to accept that grand reason as conclusive, just that he has need of her. There's a wonderful philosophy in some women. When they come to a certain pitch they'll bear anything, and she's one of that sort.

UNCLE J. Doctor, tell me, is the scene tonight a usual one?

DR. B. Oh, yes! Usual enough. The special circumstance of Madam being out on such a night would account for anything. She has little time, poor lady, to go anywhere, with all that's exacted from her. I can't tell what other moment she can call her own. She was probably on some errand of kindness.

UNCLE J. Doctor, I think I am more concerned than you are to prove her in the right, whatever happens, but it seems to

me she should have spoken and explained.

DR. B. Mr. John Trevanion, there is one thing I *am* certain of, that yon poor lady by your brother's dying bed is a good woman and that the life he leads her is just a hell on earth.

UNCLE J. I believe all that. I believe every word. Still—but yet——

[*Exit* JOHN TREVANION.

DR. B. Why should not Madam take the air at any hour she pleases? Poor wearied soul!

[*Enter* ROLAND, *very agitated, from conservatory. Seizes* DR. B.'s *arm.*]

ROLAND. I say, doctor, I want to tell you. I was there all the time. What could I do? I was at the window before—and I saw—Good gracious, you don't think *I wanted* to see! I thought it was better to keep quiet than to show that I had been there all the time.

DR. B. You ought to have gone away; but there is no great harm done, except to your nerves—you look quite upset. He was very bad. When a man lets himself go on every

occasion, and does and says exactly what he has a mind to, that 's what it ends in at the last. It is perhaps as well that a young fellow like you should know.

ROLAND. Oh! Hang it. That's not the worst. I never liked old Trevanion. It's not that. [*He looks round suspiciously — eagerly*]. Doctor, you are Madam's friend. You take her side?

DR. B. If she has a side, yes, to the last of my strength.

ROLAND. Then I don't mind telling you. When he began about Madam, I just went into the window seat, out of the way. I went right into the window. You can see out into the park. I never thought of that. I was not thinking anything; when I saw——

DR. B. Get it out, for Heaven's sake! You had no right to be there. What did you see? Some of the maids——

ROLAND. Doctor, I must get it off my mind. I saw Madam parting with—a man. I can't help it. I must get it out. I saw her as plainly as I see you.

DR. B. [*Very disturbed and startled—laughs*

to conceal it.] In a dark night like this! You saw a maid parting with her sweetheart. All cats are grey at night. [*Angrily.*] And you think it is a nice thing to tell a cock-and-bull story like this—you a visitor in the house?

ROLAND. Doctor, you do me a great injustice. Do you think Madam could be mistaken for a maid? I saw her—part from him, and come straight up to the house—and in another moment she came into the room, and I—and I—saw all that happened there.

DR. B. For an unwilling witness, Mr. Hamerton, you seem to have seen a good deal.

ROLAND. So I was—unwilling, most unwilling. I 'd rather a thousand pounds I hadn't seen her. What am I to do?

DR. B. Do? Hold your tongue. The Trevanions are kittle customers when their blood 's up. I would hold my tongue for the future if I were you.

[*Enter* RUSSELL.]

RUSSELL. Please, sir, will you come directly. Mr. Trevanion is much worse.

DR. B. How has it happened? You've been carrying him some of your d——d ill-natured

stories again. I'll have you tried for manslaughter— [*Exeunt* Dr. B. *and* Russell.

Enter Rosalind.

Rosalind. I cannot go to bed, and it is not late. I think my father is worse. I wish I could see Uncle John.

[Roland *comes forward to her.*]

Roland. Can I do anything—be of any use?

Rosalind. Thank you, Roland. You are always kind, and it is a comfort to know you are here. Are you going to stay all night?

Roland. Yes. Mr. John Trevanion asked me, and you know well enough I always stay near you if I get the chance.

Rosalind. I know well enough you are always ready to talk nonsense when you get the chance, but this is not the time for nonsense, Roland. I 'm very anxious and disturbed.

Roland. So am I, Rosalind. Do tell me what you think about it all?

Rosalind. Think about it all? I think my father very ill, and my mother almost worn out with watching and nursing him.

ROLAND. I don't mean that. I mean——

Enter JOHN TREVANION.

UNCLE J. Rose, he is very ill this time, very excited, calling for Blake, says he shall alter his will. It is terrible, terrible. Hallo, Hamerton. I 'm afraid I 'm treating you very casually, but we are very anxious. If you don't care to go to bed yet, you 'll find everything ready in the smoking-room.

ROLAND. Thanks, thanks. [*Exit* ROLAND.

UNCLE J. [*A pause.*] Rosalind, I think that woman is sublime. She knows the first thing he will do will be to harm and shame her, and yet there she is doing everything for him in the tenderest way. I don't know if she is a sinner or not, but she is sublime——

ROSALIND. Who are you talking of as 'that woman,'—of my mother, Uncle John?

UNCLE J. Forgive me, my dear. I reverence her as you do—but these doubts bewilder me. [*Takes her arm tenderly.*] There is a mystery. You say she has no secrets from you and yet you can thrown no light on this one secret. Where is it that she goes? If *you* know about it there is not another word

to say: for nothing that is not innocent would be confided to you.

[ROSALIND *covers her face with her hands.*]

ROSALIND. [*whispering.*] If there was anything to confide.

UNCLE J. And now your father has sent for his lawyer. It means trouble. Ha! who is that at the door? Why, it 's Blake already. He was not expected till to-morrow. Why does he come at an hour like this?

ROSALIND. I will go, uncle. I do not wish to meet Mr. Blake.

UNCLE J. Ah! You don't mean to say Mr. Blake has ever presumed—Ah!

[*Exit* ROSALIND.

Enter BLAKE.

BLAKE. How is he? I hope I 'm not too late.

UNCLE J. [*Stiffly.*] For what? If it is my brother you mean, I believe he will see you, even at this unusual hour.

BLAKE. I thought as the carriage was sent for me there was no time to lose.

UNCLE J. Who sent the carriage?

BLAKE. Why, Madam Trevanion, of course. I suppose then there is no such alarming

hurry. Of course you know what's up now?

UNCLE J. If you mean what are my brother's intentions, I know nothing about them.

BLAKE. No more do I. I can't think what he's got on his mind; though we've been very confidential over it all lately—[*a pause*]. It would be a great assistance to me, if he's going to tamper with that will again, to know how the land lies—[*a pause*]. What is wrong? If all is true I hear, there has been a fine flare-up!

UNCLE J. Will you remember, Mr. Blake, you are speaking of my brother's affairs? We are not in the habit of having '*flare-ups*' here.

BLAKE. I mean no offence, Mr. John, no offence. It's a lie, then, that is flying about the country?

UNCLE J. What is flying about the country? If it is about a 'flare-up,' you may be sure it is a lie.

BLAKE. I don't stand upon the *word*, but I thought I might speak frankly to *you*. Rumours are flying everywhere that for some time past Mr. Trevanion has been out

of one fit into another—dying of it—and that Madam——

UNCLE J. [*Standing up.*] Well, sir! What of Madam?

BLAKE. I have *myself* the greatest respect for Mrs. Trevanion.

UNCLE J. You would be a bold man if you expressed any other sentiment here. What has rumour ventured to say of my sister?

BLAKE. Of course it's all talk. I dare say the story means nothing; but knowing as much as I do—a lawyer, you know, like a doctor and people used to say a clergyman——

UNCLE J. Is bound to hold his tongue, is he not?

BLAKE. Oh! as for that, a member of the family is not like a stranger. I took it for granted you would naturally be on the injured husband's side!

UNCLE J. Mr. Blake, you make assumptions which would be intolerable even to a stranger; and to a brother and friend, understanding the matter, I hope, a little better than you do, they are offensive and impertinent in the highest degree. Take

care what you do. Don't let the last act of Mr. Trevanion's life be an injustice if you can help it. Your father—if your father were here——

BLAKE. Would inspire Mr. Trevanion with more confidence. It is unfortunate, but *that* is not the Squire's opinion. He has preferred the younger man, as many others do.

UNCLE J. I hope you will justify his choice. But remember, to make serious changes in a moment of passion is a serious responsibility—and my poor brother will have no time to repent.

BLAKE. The responsibility will be Mr. Trevanion's, not mine. I am here to execute his wishes.

Enter MADAM, *goes straight up to* MR. BLAKE *and shakes hands.*

MADAM. I am very glad you have come, Mr. Blake. Thank you for being so prompt. My husband, perhaps, after he has seen you, will be calmer and able for rest. Will you come to him at once, please.

[*Exeunt* BLAKE *and* MADAM.

UNCLE J. It is not possible! Nothing but

good is possible of such a woman. If he had been about to secure her a fortune, she could not have been more anxious to introduce him!

Enter MADAM.

MADAM. I am restless and cannot be still. Do you know, John, for the first time he has sent me away. He will not have me with him. Before, whatever he might have against me was forgotten when he needed me. God grant that this interview may compose him and give him comfort. [*Tears break her voice.*]

[JOHN TREVANION *goes up to her, puts his hands on her shoulders and gazes into her face.*]

UNCLE J. Grace, is it possible you are sincere?

MADAM. [*Stares at him wonderingly.*] Sincere?

UNCLE J. Yes, sincere. You know that man has come for some evil purpose. Whatever they do or say together will be to your hurt and you know it, and yet you hasten his coming and tell him you are glad when he arrives!

MADAM. And you think it must be false? No; it is not false, John. [*Smiling.*] So long as he does it and gets it off his mind what is it to me? Do you know [*slowly*] that he is dying? I have nursed him and been the only one that he would have near him for years. Do you think I care what happens after? But I cannot bear to be put out of my own place for a minute now.

UNCLE J. Your own place! To bear all that abuse!

MADAM. My own place, by my husband's side. When he has done what he wants to do, his mind will be relieved, and I can go back and he will rest. He shortens his own life when he sends me away.

Enter DR. BEATON *hastily.*

DR. B. Madam! Madam! He is calling for you—and the end is very near.

CURTAIN.

Act II.

Scene: *A week later. All in black.* Mrs. Trevanion's *boudoir.* Reginald *and* Rosalind *discovered.*

Reginald. The mother might have managed better, Rosie. Why was not I sent for? I am the eldest and the heir, and I ought to have been here. Poor old papa—he would miss me, I know. He was fond of me because I am the biggest and a son. He used to tell me lots of things. I ought to have been sent for. Why didn't mother send for *me*, Rosalind?

Rosalind. I have told you before, Rex, we did not know. When they came in from dinner he was very much as usual, and in an hour he was dying. Oh! you should rather be glad you were not there. He took no notice of any one, and death is terrible.

Rex. That may be; but though you did not know, mother would know, Rosie. Do you think she wanted *me not* to be there? Russell says——

ROSALIND. Don't speak to me of that woman, Rex. She killed my father.

REX. Oh! come, Rosie. Don't talk nonsense, you know; how could she kill him? She wanted to tell him something that apparently he ought to have known. It was *that* that killed him. Don't you know that there was something that Russell had to tell him? She won't tell me what it was; but if it was her duty to tell him, how could it be her fault?

ROSALIND. As soon as mamma is well enough to think of anything, Russell must go away.

REX. You are so prejudiced, Rosalind. It does not matter to me; it is a long time since I had anything to do with her—but for the sake of the girls I shall object to that.

ROSALIND. You!

REX. You must remember that things are changed now. The mother, of course, will have it all in her hands, I suppose, for a time. But it is *I* who am the head. And when she knows that I object——

ROSALIND. Reginald, how dare you speak so? What have you to do with it?—a boy at school!

REX. I may be at school—and perhaps I am not very old, but I am Trevanion of Highcourt now. I am the head of the family, whatever Uncle John may say.

ROSALIND. You are very disappointing, Rex. Most people are. One looks for something so different. I thought you would be sorry for mamma, and think of her above everything, but it is of yourself you are thinking. Trevanion of Highcourt! I wonder you can——

REX. I didn't mean—to forget papa. [*A pause.*] Mamma won't be so awfully cut up, Rosie. He—bullied her awfully. I wouldn't say a word, but he did, you know.

ROSALIND. He was your father, and he is dead. You might have the decency not to speak of him in that way.

REX. Well! I am not going to be dictated to by you, I can tell you, at all events. I shall go to the stable. [*Exit* REX.

ROSALIND. I wonder if Rex has *any* feeling. I sometimes doubt it.

Enter UNCLE JOHN.

UNCLE J. Where is that boy? Couldn't you keep him with you for once in a way,

Rosalind? There is no keeping him still or out of mischief. I did hope you could have exercised a little influence over him—at this moment, at least.

ROSALIND. I wish I knew what to do, Uncle John. Unless I amuse him I cannot do anything; and how *am* I to amuse him just now?

UNCLE J. My dear, a woman must learn to do that, whether it is possible or not. Better that you should exert yourself a little than that he should drift among the grooms and amuse himself in that way. Girls are always expected to keep the boys out of mischief, without asking how they are to do it. [*Throws himself wearicdly into a chair on the other side of the little table where* ROSALIND *is sitting.*] Rosie, we have got a terrible business before us! I don't know how we are to get out of it! My heart fails me when I think—I can't tell you what a terrible thing we have to do. God help that poor woman. God forgive her if she has done wrong, for she has a cruel punishment to bear.

ROSALIND. [*Springing up.*] Mamma?

UNCLE J. God knows what we are all to do, for it will affect us all. You, poor child; you will have to judge for yourself. I don't mean to say or suggest anything. You will have to show what mettle is in you, Rosalind; you as well as the rest.

ROSALIND. What is this terrible thing? O Uncle John! Can't you tell me? You make me wretched; I fancy I don't know what.

UNCLE J. Nothing that you can fear will be as bad as the reality. I cannot tell you now. It would be wrong to say anything till *she* knows; but I am as weak as a child, Rosie. I want your hand to help me. [ROSALIND *gives him her hand. He strokes it tenderly.*] Poor little thing, there is not much strength in it. That hour with old Blake this morning has been too much both for him and me.

ROSALIND. Is it something in the will?

UNCLE J. Charlie Blake will not show. He is ashamed of his share in it; but I suppose he could do nothing. It has made him ill, his father says. There 's something — in Dante, is it?—about men being possessed

by an evil spirit after their real soul is gone. I wonder if it is true. It would almost be a relief, in this case, to believe that it was not my brother——

ROSALIND. Uncle John. Are you speaking of my father?

UNCLE J. Don't ask any questions. Haven't I told you I can't answer you? The fact is I 'm distracted with all this trouble—where *is* that boy?

ROSALIND. I think he has gone to the stables, Uncle John. It is hard upon him just now in this sad house. He doesn't know what to do. There is nothing to amuse him.

UNCLE J. Is it necessary that his young lordship should always be amused? Well, then find something to amuse him with in the house. Better anywhere than among those grooms, hearing stories perhaps—for God's sake, dance or sing or play cards. It doesn't matter what you do—only keep him indoors, where he will hear no gossip; that would be the last aggravation. I will go and find him if I can, and bring him in.

[*Exit* JOHN.

[ROSALIND *sits down with a book by the fire.*]

Enter MADAM *slowly.*

MADAM. I had almost forgotten the existence of this room. So many things have dropped away from me. I forget what I used to do. What used I to do, Rosie, before——

ROSALIND. [*Goes to her lovingly.*] You have always done—everything for everybody—as long as I can remember.

MADAM. [*Shakes her head.*] I don't think it has come to much use. I have been thinking over my life, over and over, these few days. It has not been successful, Rosalind. Something has always spoiled my best efforts. I wonder if other people feel the same. It is a curious thing to stand still, so living as I am and look back upon my life and sum it up as if it were past.

ROSALIND. It is because a chapter of it is past. O mamma! I don't wonder. And you stood at your post till the last—till the last moment.

MADAM. Yes, I stood at my post, but perhaps another kind of woman would have soothed

him when I irritated him. Your father—was not kind to me.

ROSALIND. [*Flinging her arms round Madam's neck.*] No, mother.

MADAM. He was not kind. And yet, now that he has gone out of my life, I feel as if nothing was left. People will say I am a hypocrite. They will say I am glad to be free. But it is not so. Rosalind, remember man and wife, even when they wound each other every day, cannot be nothing to each other. My occupation is gone. I feel like a wreck cast upon the shore.

ROSALIND. Mother! how can you say that when we are all here, your children, who can do nothing without you?

MADAM. My children—[*wildly*]—which children? [*Walks up and down with agitation.*] He said very sharp things. Oh, things that cut like a knife. But I was not without fault any more than he; there is one matter in which I have not kept faith with him—I should like to tell you, to see what you think. I made him a promise and—I did not keep it. He had some reason in all the angry things he said.

[ROSALIND *has listened eagerly, now takes* MADAM'S *hand between hers and waits to hear more.*]

[*Drearily.*] I have had no success in that—in that no more than in the rest. I have not done well with anything—except [*smiling faintly*] you, Rosalind, my own dear, who are none of mine.

ROSALIND. I am all yours, mother; don't disown me, for I shall alway claim you—always.

MADAM. I am so restless, dear, so nervous. You had better leave me. I do nothing but walk up and down and it frightens Jane, but I can do nothing else.

ROSALIND. Stay here with me, mamma, and walk about and do as you please. I understand you better than Jane.

MADAM. To-day will be the end and perhaps the beginning. I feel as if all would be over to-day. After that, Rosalind— Go away now, dear, to your Aunt Sophy, and don't let me be disturbed by any one. I *must* be alone. I have that to do in which no one can help me, but do not let me be disturbed. That, indeed, will be a help.

[*Exeunt* ROSALIND.

[MADAM *goes to French window and looks out anxiously, and beckons to some one outside. Returns to the table.*]

Enter EVERARD *by window, quickly and impatiently.*

EVERARD. At last! Do you know, I have waited here for hours?

MADAM. You knew it was impossible for me to fix a time. How could I leave the house in such circumstances? Even now I have outraged decency by letting you come. I have gone against nature.

EVERARD. Not for the first time [*laughs*].

MADAM. If so, *you* should be the last to reproach me—for it was for you.

EVERARD. Ah! for me! That's one way of putting it. Like all spurious sacrifices if one examined a little deeper—you have had the best of it anyhow!

MADAM. All this has been said so often before. It was not for this you insisted on coming. What is it? Tell me quickly and go before I am found out! Found out! O God! I am 'found out' already. I dare not ask myself what they think.

EVERARD. Whatever they think, you may be

sure it is not the truth. Nobody could guess at the truth. It is too unnatural, that I should be lurking here in wretchedness, and you——

MADAM. [*Quickly.*] But you are comfortable, Jane told me.

EVERARD. Comfortable according to Jane's ideas, which are naturally different from mine. What I want is to know what is to become of *ME?* What are you going to do? Will you do me justice now, at last?

MADAM. O Edmund, what justice have you made possible? What can I do but implore you to go? Are not you in danger every day?

EVERARD. Less here than anywhere; though I understand there have been inquiries made; the constable in the village shows a degree of interest.

MADAM. O my boy! [*seizes his arm*] for God's sake, go.

EVERARD. And not bring shame upon you, Madam? Why should I mind? If I have gone wrong, whose fault is it? You must take that responsibility some time or other. And now, that you are free——

MADAM. I cannot defy the law [*moans*] I

cannot deliver you from what you have done. God knows, though it had been to choose between you and everything else, I would have done you 'justice,' as you say, as soon as it was possible. But to what use now? It would only direct attention to you—bring the——

EVERARD. Police, you mean [*laughs*]. And no great harm, either, except to you; for, of course, all my antecedents would be published. But there are such things as disguises, and I am clever at a make-up. You might receive me, and no one would be the wiser. The cost of a new outfit, a new name—you might choose me a nice one. Of all places in the world, a gentleman's house in the country is the last where they would look for me. And then if there was any danger you could swear I was——

MADAM. Edmund! Edmund, spare me. I cannot do this—to live in a deception under my children's eyes.

EVERARD. [*Laughs.*] Your children's eyes!

MADAM. I am used to hear everything said to me that can be said to a woman [*quickly*], and if there was anything wanting you make

it up. I have had full measure, heaped up and running over. But there is no time for argument now. Now there is no safety, but in getting you away. You know this, surely, as well as I do. The anxiety you have kept me in, it is impossible to tell. I have been calmer since he is gone, it matters less. But for your own sake——

EVERARD. I will do nothing for my own sake. I am lost anyhow.

MADAM. O my son, my son! Do not break my heart—at your age! If you will only set your mind to better ways, everything can be put right again. As soon as I know you are safe I will take it all in hand. I have not been able hitherto, and now I am afraid to direct observation upon you. But only let me know you are safe: and you have my promise. I will pay anything, whatever they ask.

EVERARD. Misprision of felony! They won't do that, they know better [*laughs*]. If there is any paying it had much better be to me.

MADAM. You shall be provided, if you will only think of your own safety and go away.

EVERARD. Are you sure, then, of having come into your fortune? Has the old fellow shown so much confidence in you? All the better for me. Your generosity in that way will always be fully appreciated. But I would not trouble about Liverpool; they're used to such losses. It does them no harm, only makes up for the salaries they ought to pay their clerks and don't. But money is always welcome here. [*Points to himself.*]

MADAM. You shall have what you want. But, Edmund, for God's sake, if you care either for yourself or me, go away.

EVERARD. You would do a great deal better to introduce me here. It would be safer than Spain. And leave to make my way. I might be a long-lost relative come to console you in your distress. That would suit me admirably I much prefer it to going away. You should see how well I would fill the post of comforter.

MADAM. Don't! Don't! I cannot bear to hear you.

EVERARD. Why? It is far the most feasible way and the safest. Who would look for

an absconded clerk at Highcourt in the midst of family mourning? And I have views of my own in this house. Come, think it over.

MADAM. I will not. I have done much, but there are some things that are too much. Understand me. *I will not.* In no conceivable circumstance, whatever may happen. Rather will I leave you to your fate.

EVERARD. What! and bring shame and ruin on yourself?

MADAM. I do not care. I am desperate. Much, much would I do for you, but not this. Listen! I will not do it. It is not to be mentioned again.

EVERARD. It is all your fault. What was to be expected? I have never had a chance. It is just that you should bear the brunt, for it is your fault.

MADAM. I acknowledge it. I have failed in everything, and whatever I can do to atone, I will do it. Edmund, oh, listen! Go away! You are not safe here! You risk everything, even my power to help you. You must go, you must go. [*Seizes his arm.*] There is no alternative. You shall

have money, but go, go. Promise me that you will go.

EVERARD. If you use force——

MADAM. Force! What force have I against you? It is you who force me to see you here. If I am discovered, God help me—the day after my husband's funeral—how am I to have the means of doing anything for you? You will understand that. You shall have the money; but promise me to go.

EVERARD. You are very vehement, but still that is a strong argument. But you must bring me some money to-night, and we shall see what I 'll do.

MADAM. I will send Jane.

EVERARD. I don't want Jane. Bring it yourself, or I shall not listen to another word.

[*Exit* EVERARD *by window.*

MADAM. Is there to be no end to this misery? [*Sinks down on sofa.*]

Enter JANE.

JANE. Madam, dear Madam, they have come in, and Mr. John Trevanion is looking for you.

MADAM. Well, Jane, I am here. [*Calmly,*

and then breaking down, she throws herself on JANE'S *shoulder, weeping bitterly.*] O Jane, once more, once more; and then it is to be over, or so he says at least. On the day after my husband's funeral! What could any one think of me, if it were known? And how can I tell it is not known?

JANE. Dear Madam, let us hope for the best. Besides, who has any right to find fault now? The only one that had any right to complain——

MADAM. [*With energy.*] The only one who had no right to complain. [*Quietly.*] I feel the misery of it myself. I think my punishment is more than any woman can bear. I have always been afraid of to-day. I cannot tell why. Perhaps this last meeting has been weighing on me—this last meeting, which will be a parting too, perhaps for ever. And yet I ought to be thankful, for that is the only thing to be desired. But when I think of all that might have been, and of what is—of my life all gone between the one who has been my tyrant, and the other—the other against whom I have sinned. And that one has died in

anger, and the other—oh, the other! [*Sobs bitterly on* JANE's *shoulder.*]

JANE. O Madam, who can tell? His heart may be touched at last.

[*Enter* DORRINGTON.]

DOR. Mr. John Trevanion's compliments, and will Madam receive him and Mr. Blake for a few minutes?

MADAM. Certainly, Dorrington. Ask them to come up here. [*Exit* DORRINGTON. Go, dear Jane; I will come presently, and lie down for a little. I am very weary.

[*Exit* JANE *at side.*

When this business part is over, I shall feel calmer and more at rest.

Enter UNCLE JOHN, *old* MR. BLAKE, *and* DR. BEATON.

UNCLE J. My dear Grace, we have taken the liberty of asking to see you.

MADAM. I am very glad to see you if you want me, John.

UNCLE J. Because we have something very painful to say.

BLAKE. Very painful; more painful than anything I ever had to do in all my life.

MADAM. [*Looking at them both quickly.*] Yes?

UNCLE J. It is so. We must not mince our words. Whatever may have passed between you two, whatever he may have heard or found out, we can say nothing less than that it is most unjust and cruel.

DR. B. Savage! barbarous! I should never have thought it. I should have refused to do it.

UNCLE J. But we have no alternative. We are bound to carry his will out, and to let you know without delay.

MADAM. The delay is already too much. Is it something in my husband's will? Why try to frighten me? Tell me at once.

UNCLE J. God knows we are not trying to frighten you. Nothing so terrible could occur to your mind or any one's, Grace. The executioner used to ask pardon of those he was about to—and I think I—*I* of all people—am going to give you your sentence of death.

MADAM. Then I give you—my pardon—freely. What is it? Do not torture me any longer.

UNCLE J. [*Covers his face with his hands.*] Tell her, Blake; I cannot. [*A pause.*]

BLAKE. I will spare you the legal language. It is this. The children are all provided for, as is natural and fit, but with this proviso—that the mother shall be at once and entirely separated from them. If Mrs. Trevanion remains with them, or takes any one of them to be with her, they are totally disinherited, and their money is left to various hospitals and charities. Either Mrs. Trevanion must leave them at once and give up all communication with them, or they lose everything. That is, in brief, what we have to say.

MADAM. To leave them—my children? To be separated from my children?

[BLAKE *nods his head sadly.* UNCLE JOHN *steps forward, stops, and looks hopelessly at her.*]

It is not *that*? My head is going round —I didn't understand you rightly. It is not *that.* [*Jumps up suddenly and clasps her hands together and cries out*:] My God!

[*The men all spring up.*]

UNCLE J. Doctor, help her! She will fall! It has killed her.

[DOCTOR *goes up to her. She puts them all away by a motion of her hands.*]

MADAM. [*Scornfully.*] The doctor? What can the doctor do for me? I need no support. [*She stands still with her hands clasped, and there is a pause.*] Will you tell me exactly what he says? or stay—let me see it for myself.

[BLAKE *hands her the will. She sits down and reads it.*]

Now I begin to understand it. I—I suppose there is no way—no way.

BLAKE. No, Madam. He had the right and he has used it. God forgive him. He has used it as no man should.

MADAM. Then there is no help for me. [*Quietly.*] No help for me! After seventeen years! He had the right, you say? Oh, how strange a right! Does he say where I am to go? Is there any time given to prepare? Have you told my boy?

UNCLE J. Not a word has been said, Grace, to any one.

MADAM. Ah! What is my boy to be told? A boy of that age? He will think his

mother is—John help me! What will you say to my boy?

UNCLE J. God help us all, Grace! I do not know.

MADAM. Amy, my sweet little maid! my baby girlie and Rosalind. Oh, Rosalind will trust me, but Rex—it will be better just to tell him the simple truth, that it is his father's will—and when he is a man he will—perhaps—understand. [*She turns with a faint smile to* BLAKE.] Is there anything else I ought to hear?

BLAKE. There is this, Mrs. Trevanion. One thing is just among so much. What was settled on you is untouched. You have a right to——

MADAM. [*Tosses up her head indignantly and turns towards the door. After a few steps she comes back.*] Look you, gentlemen, here is something that is beyond you, which a woman has to bear. I must accept this humiliation, too. I cannot dig, and to beg I am ashamed. I must take his money and be thankful, and God help me. [*She turns to leave the room and is met by* AUNT SOPHY *and* ROSALIND *coming in.*]

AUNT SOPHY. My dear Grace, I had no idea you would be able to come down to-day. But you must be careful, dear, and not overdo it. And all you gentlemen here! It is too much for her, indeed it is. You are doing too much. Endurance is not boundless.

MADAM. Is it not?

AUNT S. You ought not to have come down-stairs this morning. You always did too much. I 'm sure all the watching and nursing you have had would have killed ten ordinary people. But she never spared herself, did she, doctor? Well, it is a satisfaction now! You must feel that you neglected nothing, and that everything was done—everything! I am sure you and I, John, can bear witness to that. A more devoted nurse, man never had. Poor Reginald! [*Holds handkerchief to her eyes.*] If he did not always appear as grateful as he ought, it was his health that you must blame and not his heart.

MADAM. All that is over and forgotten; there is no blame.

AUNT S. Yes, my dear, that is a most natural and beautiful sentiment for you. But John

and I can never forget how patient you were. A king could not have been better taken care of.

Dr. B. Every one knows that. I have never known such nursing.

Aunt S. And if I were you, I would not worry about taking up everything so soon again. You want a thorough rest. I wish indeed you would just make up your mind to come home with me, for a change would do you good. I said to poor dear Maria Heathcote when I left her yesterday, 'My dear, you may expect me confidently to-morrow, unless poor dear Grace wants me. But she has, of course, the first claims upon me.' If I were you, I would not try my strength too much. You should have stayed in your room to-day, and have had a tray with something light every two hours, and Rosalind and I would have come up and sat with you. I have had more experience than you in trouble, for I have buried *three* dear husbands, and that has always been my experience. A week in my own room and something light every two hours. And to-morrow is a new day.

MADAM. To-morrow, there will be many things to think of. You must go back to school on Monday, Rex, that will be best. You must not lose any time now, but be a man as soon as you can for all our sakes.

REX. Oh! as for being a man, that doesn't just depend on age, mother. It depends on a fellow's character and circumstances.

MADAM. That's what I think, too. And, Sophy, if you will take Rosalind and the little girls instead of me, I think it will do them good. I—you may suppose, have many things to think of.

AUNT S. Leave them, dear, till you are stronger. That is my advice and I know more about trouble than you do.

MADAM. [*Smiles faintly.*] I should like the girls to go with you for a change, and Russell can go too to take care of Amy.

ROSALIND. I would not keep her, mamma. She is dangerous. She is wicked.

REX. What do you mean by that, Rose? Russell! I should as soon think of mamma going as Russell. She says mamma hates her, but I say——

MADAM. I wonder that you don't find your-

self above nursery gossip, Rex, at your age. Never mind, it is a matter to be talked of afterwards. [*Turns pleadingly to* Uncle John.] You are not going away immediately, John?

Uncle J. [*Looks at her tenderly.*] Not as long as I can be of any use or comfort to you or the children.

Dr. B. I think, Mr. John, we should be moving now and leave Mrs. Trevanion to rest a bit. I do hope, Madam, you will be well advised and not try yourself too far, but just go to your room for a while's quiet, anyway, and we will all be the better for a walk.

[*The gentlemen all go out, and* Rex *is following when* Madam *calls him back.*]

Madam. Rex, my son, I want to speak to you.

Rex. What do you want with me, mother? It isn't right, it isn't indeed, to call me back like a child. I 'm not a child and I ought to be there to hear what they settle. Don't you see that it is my concern?

Madam. You can go presently. Yes, my boy, it is your concern. And the girls are your concern. I want you to think so. Being

the head of a house means a great deal—not only being a person of importance——

REX. I know, I know all that. If this is all you wanted to say——

MADAM. Almost all. That you must think of your sisters. It is unfortunate, oh! very unfortunate for you to be left so young, but your Uncle John will be your true friend.

REX. Well, that doesn't matter much. For you know, mammy, if I don't quite know about everything, I can come and talk it over with you.

MADAM. My boy, my own dear boy. [*She takes him in her arms—he shakes himself off.*]

REX. I really must go now or I shall never catch them up. [*Exit* REX.

MADAM. Good-bye, my own dear boy. [*She rises.*] I think, Sophy, I will take your advice and go to my room now. And you will arrange with Rosalind to take them home with you.

AUNT S. That I will with all my heart, and I don't despair of getting you to come. You will feel so much better when you have rested and taken something light to eat. Shall I sit with you?

MADAM. Thank you, not to-day. I have much to do and am tired out.

[ROSALIND *has risen and gone to her. She puts her arm round her and draws her to the door.*]

God bless you, my darling, I can give you no explanation and you will hear other things. Think of me as kindly as you can, my own, that are none of mine.

ROSALIND. Mother, you can do no wrong.

MADAM. God bless you, my own dear. [*Exit* MADAM.

AUNT S. Well! My dear, I think I shall follow your dear mamma's example and go and rest a little before dinner. This is a trying time, and I must consider my health at my time of life. [*Exit* AUNT SOPHY.

[ROSALIND *alone.*]

ROSALIND. What an endless sort of day this is! Every one is mysterious as if some cloud were hanging over the house. Mother is so unlike herself! What does it mean? She looked as if some dreadful grief had come upon her.

Enter ROLAND.

O Roland, is that you?

ROLAND. Yes, Rosalind. I rode over to hear how you all were, and I wanted so much to see *you*. I could not keep away.

ROSALIND. It is kind of you to come.

ROLAND. Kind to myself.

ROSALIND. I am very anxious about mother. I think something terrible has happened to her.

ROLAND. I know something terrible has happened. I can't bear to hear you call her 'mother.' I can't bear to see you so deceived. I 'll tell you what I saw myself. No one was more fond of Madam than I; I 'd have gone to the stake for her. But that night—that night, if you remember, when the thorn was hanging to her dress—I had gone away into the conservatory because I couldn't bear to hear your father going on. Rosalind, just hear what I 've got to say. And there I saw—oh saw! with my own eyes—I saw her standing—with a man. I saw them part, she kis——

[ROSALIND *springing up.*]

ROSALIND. Do you tell me this to make me love you or hate you?

ROLAND. To undeceive you; that you may know the truth.

ROSALIND. That she was talking to a man—well, and what then?

ROLAND. O Rosalind! After that can you stand up for her still?

ROSALIND. I don't know what there is to stand up for. My mother is not a girl like me. She is the best judge of what is right.

ROLAND. [*Slowly.*] And you don't mind?

ROSALIND. Go away! [*Points to door.*] You live your little, idle, easy life, and you dare to judge and condemn a woman like my mother! It is not the truth, and if it was the truth, I should never forgive you for saying it. I should never speak to you again. But it is not the truth. Go away.

ROLAND. Rosalind!

ROSALIND. Must I ring for Dorrington to put you out? Go, I tell you! [*Exit* ROLAND.

ROSALIND. It is too bad, too cruel. O mother, what is it, what is it?

[*Exit* ROSALIND, *weeping.*

Enter UNCLE JOHN *and* DR. BEATON.

UNCLE J. Have you ever noticed in your walks, doctor, a young fellow? You couldn't but remark him—a sort of tenor-looking man, big-eyed and pale-faced.

DR. B. All pulmonary. I know the man you mean. He has been hanging about for a month more or less, with no visible object. To tell the truth.

[UNCLE JOHN *raises his hand.*]

UNCLE J. I find that he has been in hiding for some offence, and men have come after him here because of an envelope with the Highcourt stamp—and a direction written in my poor brother's hand.

DR. B. In your *brother's* hand?

UNCLE J. I thought I should surprise you, doctor.

DR. B. He did not look like a gentleman—a limp, hollowed-eyed, consumptive-looking subject.

UNCLE J. I don't see what his health has got to do with it, I confess. But I 'm cross, doctor, forgive me. I 'm distressed and tired, and am not company for any one.

DR. B. Just take a rest by the fire, Mr. John. You 'll be all the better for it.

[*Exit* DOCTOR BEATON.

UNCLE J. That I should have dealt the blow! *I*, of all people! She cannot suffer under it more than I do. It is all too cruel, that

a man should leave all this misery behind him! That man my brother, that woman Grace! What can I do? I *cannot* turn her out. Her for whom I would so willingly lay down my life! [*Sits down by the fire and falls asleep. Room gets darker and darker.*]

Enter ROSALIND, *excitedly. Shakes him by the shoulder.*

ROSALIND. Uncle John! Uncle John!

UNCLE J. Rosalind, what 's the matter!

ROSALIND. Mamma is not in her room—where is she? Where is she?

UNCLE J. Your mother is not in her room—well, perhaps she is—why, it 's dark. Your mother——

ROSALIND. Listen, Uncle John. Mamma is not in her room. She is not in the house. Jane is not in the house. Her room is all in confusion. They have gone away together. O Uncle John! My mother is gone! Where has she gone?

UNCLE J. Good God! Rosalind, you must be making some mistake.

ROSALIND. There is no mistake. I thought perhaps you might know something. [*Sobs.*] O my mother!

UNCLE J. Rosalind, leave me. I can tell you nothing—yes. I can tell you something; but I never thought it would be like this. It is your father who has driven her away.

ROSALIND. Papa, O Uncle John! Stop before you have taken everything away from me; neither father nor mother. You take everything from me!

UNCLE J. It must have happened sooner or later, and though this is a shock—a great shock—it could never have been otherwise. Read this, dear. I have not the heart to tell you. [*Hands her will. He stands leaning on mantelpiece while she reads.*]

ROSALIND. O Uncle John! It is—there never was anything so terrible! A shock! It is far worse than that! It is a home destroyed. We have nothing, nobody left, we children. My father and mother! We are orphans, and far, far worse than orphans. We have nothing left but shame—nothing but shame!

UNCLE J. Rosalind, it is worse for the others than for you. She is not your mother.

ROSALIND. For the hundredth time, I tell you, she is all the world to me, and I am the

daughter of the man who on his death-bed has brought shame on his own, and disgraced the wife who was an angel to him. That shame never can be got over! He did it and he cannot undo it. She is wicked too, she should not have left us like this. She should not have yielded, she should have resisted. She should have refused to go away.

UNCLE J. Had she done so, it would have been our duty to insist. [*Aside.*] She, in her everlasting self-abnegation, has spared me that last bitter drop.

Enter RUSSELL, *wildly.*

RUSSELL. What does this mean, Miss Rosalind? Tell me!

ROSALIND. It means that you must leave my mother's children at once—this very moment! You shall not stay with them. No, not an hour.

RUSSELL. Leave my children as I 've brought up? No, never, never. You may say what you please. You were always unnatural, that held for *her* instead of your own flesh and blood. You are cruel—cruel.

ROSALIND. I would be more cruel if I could.

You, who have taken my mother from me and made me hate and despise my own dead father. God forgive me. And it is your doing, you miserable woman. Let me never see you again. It is like death to see you. Go away—go away. Do not dare to speak to me. Go out of the house. Uncle John, will you come and turn this woman away?

UNCLE J. [*Comes forward.*] Yes, it is well that you should go at once. You have made mischief that can never be mended. No one in this house will ever forgive you. The best thing you can do is to go.

RUSSELL. The mischief was not my making. It 's not them that tells, but them that goes wrong that are to blame. And the children —there 's the children to think of—who will take care of them like me? I 'd sooner die than leave the children. Their mother [*sneeringly*] she can desert them, but I can't; it will break my heart.

UNCLE J. You had better go quietly. [*Sternly.*]

Enter REX, *hurriedly.*

REX. What does all this mean? Oh!

[*relieved*] it's only Russell. They told me some story about my mother? Why are you bullying Russell, Uncle John?

RUSSELL. O Mr. Reginald. That's right. Speak up for me. You are my own boy, and *you* are the real master.

REX. [*Not heeding her.*] Oh! If it's Russell, but they said in the stable—they told me——

Enter AUNT SOPHY.

AUNT S. For Heaven's sake, speak low! Leave the room, Russell, *at once.*

[*Exit* RUSSELL.

What does it all mean? Whatever it is, don't expose everything to the servants.

[ROSALIND *draws* REX *to back and talks to him.*]

UNCLE J. Sophy, Grace has left the house. If you read this, her husband's will, you will see that if she has acted quickly, she has acted well.

[AUNT SOPHY *goes to back and reads.* REX *comes forward.*]

REX. What does she mean by it? What did father mean by it? Was it just to make us all as wretched as possible, as if things weren't bad enough before?

AUNT S. [*Comes forward.*] But how can he part the children from their mother? She ought not to have left them.

UNCLE J. If she had not done it, the children would have been destitute, Sophy. It was my miserable business to make her do it, or ruin the children.

REX. Not me. [*Loudly.*] He couldn't have taken anything from me. What had she to be frightened about? I suppose there would have been plenty to keep the girls too.

UNCLE J. You 're wrong. Highcourt was not entailed. Your father had the free disposal of all his property.

REX. Oh! That 's a different thing, then. Some one might have stopped it if they tried. If I 'd been at home——

AUNT S. Well, John, I feel with Rex. It ought to have been stopped. However, the thing now is to stop any scandal. Rosalind, everything must be got ready to leave Highcourt to-morrow morning. You girls must all come with me.

UNCLE J. That is all that remains to be done. Rex, you must go to school to-morrow.

REX. Of course, I know that, without being ordered about like a child!

[*Exeunt all but* UNCLE JOHN.

JOHN. [*Walking up and down.*] Where has she gone? What will become of her? I cannot help nor comfort her, for it is my brother who has struck her down. She would not listen to sympathy from me! How could she? [*Sinks down in chair.*]

Enter MADAM, *through window, in cloak and hat, looks round anxiously.*

MADAM. John! my brother John! [*John springs up. She stretches out both hands to him, he takes them eagerly and holds them.*] I may call you so still, mayn't I? I have always felt towards you so, and it seems a link to those I am leaving. You will not try to bring me back. I am safe in your hands. It is a terrible additional humiliation in my great distress that I must take the provision my husband has made, and cannot fling it back indignantly as a younger woman might.

JOHN. It is your right, nothing but your right, Grace.

MADAM. My right! Ah! An outcast and disgraced!

JOHN. No! my sister, no, not disgraced! That can never be!

MADAM. I am old enough to know, and bitterly acknowledge that I cannot maintain myself: [*slowly*] and I have others dependent on me. [*John drops her hands proudly and coldly.*] This necessity will always make it easy enough to find me, but I do not fear that you will wish to seek me out or bring me back. I desire you to know that I understand my husband's will better than any one else, and, perhaps, knowing his nature, blame him less than you do.

JOHN. Grace, tell me, explain this mystery to me. I cannot believe ill of you.

MADAM. Ill of me! Oh! That must be as you will! To explain or speak now would bring ruin on one I love and must cherish, come what may!

JOHN. Tho' your words seem to condemn you. I must believe in and trust you still.

MADAM [*taking his hand*]. My children will grow up without knowing me; be a father

to them, John, as much as you can [*hands him a letter*]. Give this letter to Rosalind. It will do her no harm. Anyhow, she will believe no evil of me! God bless her! Pity me a little, John, I have taken my doom quietly because I have no hope; neither in what I leave nor what I go to is there any hope. [*Exit.*

[JOHN *buries his face in his hands on the table.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE: *A large hotel at any foreign baths, with practical window and steps up to door. Garden with seat, chairs and table, etc.*

Two years later. August. Early dawn. Enter MADAM *slowly down steps.*

MADAM. How strange it is to come from that room of death into this world of life. All nature waking to a new day! and he! the object of so many thoughts and cares passing

away to another—ah, to what! Oh! that I could take all upon *me* and that the Maker would accept it as my fault—mine it is—who abandoned him, who left him unguided, unbeloved till all the dreadful, dreadful harm was done, till everything was too late! [*sits down.*] And to think the end should come here—where the others are—where I cannot fly and avoid them. My God, avoid them, fly from them, my own little children, as near as he is.

Enter JANE.

JANE. O Madam, dear Madam, I thought I should find you here. You should be resting after all your long watching instead of coming here, only to look at their windows, when you ought to have tried to sleep.

MADAM. I know, I know, but how can I sleep between him and them. While he does not want me, to look at their windows can do no harm. Is he still asleep? No change? It is a strange life, but my life has always been strange, I think. I cannot leave this place, Jane, till, till—you know.

JANE. Madam, you know also—it will not be long.

MADAM. I know it, and God help me. I know it is for the best, but let me think of the others for a moment.

JANE. I tremble, Madam, every time you steal into their rooms to look at those children. You will be discovered some time and driven out again.

MADAM. No, no. It is my only comfort and it can last for so short a time—they are asleep when I go in and no one sees me. Do you know, Jane, my baby girlie Amy calls for mammie in her sleep and puts out her arms to me. Only this very night she walked out at the open door sleeping, and I led her back, but dare not take her upstairs for fear—O God in heaven—for fear any one should see a mother carrying her child.

JANE. But dear Madam, what did you do?

MADAM. I laid her on the drawing-room sofa, she lies there now. Her arms were tight round my neck and I had to pull them away. Is there no mercy in heaven?

[*A window above opens. A nurse beckons.*]

JANE. Come in, Madam, come in. See, it is getting bright daylight.

[*Sun rises.*]

And look, the nurse calls us. She was to beckon if there was any change. Look, look. She calls us to make haste. Come, come quickly.

MADAM. [*Raising her hands.*] Strength! Give me strength for these last hours.

[*Exeunt.*

[*Stage becomes bright with sunshine.*]

Enter AUNT SOPHY *and* ROSALIND.

AUNT S. But, Rosalind, I don't understand how Amy came to be found lying on the drawing-room sofa at six o'clock in the morning.

ROSALIND. Dear Aunt Sophy, I am afraid Amy must have been walking in her sleep again. Her little feet showed that she had been out of doors—but how she came in and how she came to be comfortably tucked up on the sofa, I cannot imagine.

AUNT S. Her digestion must be wrong again, I am afraid, but it's very mysterious. I am getting terrified, Rosie. This lady who watches the children wherever they go and slips into their rooms at night and Amy who walks in her sleep and is taken care of by somebody—no one knows who! It's

not like a quiet, respectable English family, indeed it 's not. It 's quite like a foreign story and I don't like it at all. I am afraid to open my eyes after I get into bed. If there is a noise, I feel inclined to scream. [*Starting and seizing* ROSALIND.] What 's that, Rosalind? What 's that?

ROSALIND. What 's that, dear auntie, what is it?

AUNT S. Oh! how can you ask what it is. I saw something move.

ROSALIND. The branches of the trees, auntie, they move.

AUNT S. The branches! What nonsense! Branches don't put little girls on sofas, nor make them cry at night. Look, look. Are you sure you don't see anything, Rosalind?

ROSALIND. I see the trees and the shadows. You almost make me frightened too.

AUNT S. [*Trembling and clutching* ROSALIND.] I don't say I 'm frightened. Branches do move with the wind and I thought I saw something move. You said you were frightened too.

ROSALIND. All this must have some explanation, and we must clear it up.

AUNT S. It couldn't be anything supernatural, could it [*doubtfully*]? Nobody believes in that, do they—but one never knows what may happen in foreign places—they have such strange ways. Suppose, Rosalind, that Amy's lady should be something—some appearance—some mystery about the house.

ROSALIND. You thought it was Amy's digestion.

AUNT S. So I did, or it may be suppressed gout, that 's what the doctors call it. Then, you know, one says digestion and one the other thing, and how can I tell which is right? And then being abroad makes everything different. How can we tell what may have happened in great big foreign houses like this, with so many queer people coming and going? There might have been a murder or something, for anything we know.

ROSALIND. [*Nervously.*] I never heard of a ghost in an hotel.

AUNT S. In an hotel? I should think an hotel was just the sort of place for a ghost, with so many strange stories and people about.

Enter SOPHY *and* AMY. AMY *with a book, she goes to seat and reads.*

AUNT S. [*In quite a different tone.*] Mind, however, I don't believe in ghosts or anything of the sort. Only foolish persons [*looking at the children*], servants and the uneducated, put any faith in ghosts. And now your Uncle John is coming and it will all be cleared up and everything will come right. It is extraordinary what a difference a man makes.

SOPHY. [*Impertinently.*] Will Uncle John clear up about the lady? He will just laugh, I know. He will say he wished he had ladies come to see him like that. Uncle John is never serious about us children. Not that I 'm a child, though I *am* kept back in everything. He will just laugh, I know. And so do I laugh. All the fuss that is made is because Amy is the pet. *I* might see elephants in my room and you wouldn't mind, Aunt Sophy. It is because Amy is the pet.

AUNT S. You are a little impertinent girl. I think just as much about you. But [*looking at Amy who notices nothing*] how pale that

child does look. Dear me! perhaps it is suppressed gout in the family after all. You don't show any signs of it, Rosalind, Heaven be praised, nor Sophy either, nothing about *her* could be suppressed long—but just look at that child—how white she is!

ROSALIND. Amy darling, come to me.

AUNT S. Don't call her when she is reading, Rosalind. I wonder how it is the rest of you don't read. Amy always has her book. Well, perhaps she reads too much. But Uncle John is coming to-morrow and he will want the children to go out and take long, breezy walks and I dare say all this mystery will blow away. I wish he had come a little sooner; he might have tried the 'cure' as well as me, for I am sure he has rheumatism if not gout. All gentlemen of good family have always one or the other, after forty, and the 'cure' might have saved him an illness later.

ROSALIND. Amy, come here. Sophy says you know something about a lady.

AMY. Yes, Rosalind.

ROSALIND. You don't mean to say you've seen her?

[AMY *looks solemnly at* ROSALIND.]

Amy, can't you answer me? Tell me—is there anything you can't tell Rosalind? You shall not be worried or scolded, but tell *me*.

[*The child flings her arms round* ROSALIND'S *neck and sobs.*]

AMY. O Rosalind!

ROSALIND. Yes, my darling. What is it? Tell me? [*They cling to each other.*]

SOPHY. She has seen her lots of times, but she's such a story she won't tell. She is always seeing her. When you think she is quiet and asleep, she is lying shivering and shaking with the sheet over her head—and nurse is always downstairs the whole evening—and I said I should tell some day, and now I have, and I don't mind what comes of it! Only I know it is a real live lady and no silly ghost. [SOPHY *flounces off.*]

ROSALIND. Amy, did you see her?

AMY. Oh! yes, yes Rosalind.

ROSALIND. Did you know her?

AMY. Yes, Rosalind.

ROSALIND. Have you seen her before?

AMY. Oh, every night for more than a week.

ROSALIND. Is she—is she—like any one?

AMY. Oh! no, not like, not *like* any one. She is my own mammie.

ROSALIND. And you never told me, Amy.

AMY. Must mammie be dead if I see her?

ROSALIND. I think it must be so. We will say our prayers and ask if there is anything she wants us to do, to show us what it is. Do not cry, my pet. That would grieve mamma.

Enter UNCLE JOHN *in travelling dress.*

UNCLE J. Hallo, girlies. Here I am. London yesterday, here to-day. We do travel now and no mistake. Hallo! What's the matter? Amy crying and you both look so white. Let her off, Rosie, whatever it is, dear baby.

ROSALIND. Run Amy, and tell Aunt Sophia that Uncle John's come. [*Exit* AMY.] O dear uncle, it is nice to see you. We want you even more than usual.

UNCLE J. Anything wrong, dear? Rex giving more trouble as usual?

ROSALIND. No, no, he's better looked after just now. Roland Hamerton's here and goes about with him a great deal.

Enter AUNT SOPHIA.

AUNT S. My dear John, what a comfort to have you with us! Really a man is a very good thing in many ways, especially abroad, where everything is so trying and difficult, and though they are troublesome about their food and things—well, they are that at home as well, where they 've every comfort.

UNCLE J. Why! what 's the trouble now? The girls don't look well, and you are excited, Sophia. What 's it all about?

AUNT S. I am worried about Amy, she walks and talks in her sleep. She 's not well, and she is too young to try this excellent 'Koor.'

ROSALIND. Have you any news of mother, Uncle John? Is she well?

UNCLE J. It is a long time since I heard of her, but if anything had happened the lawyers would have told me. Why do you ask like that?

ROSALIND. Because—there 's a sort of mystery about us—a strange lady who is said by nurse to watch the children, and Amy fancies she sees her at night, and I can't help thinking of mother.

AUNT S. Rosalind, I 'm surprised at you—but your dear uncle will stop all these fancies.

ROSALIND. Will you telegraph to know where mother is, dear Uncle John, and if she is well? It may be fancy, but I can't help feeling as if she were near us—or dead.

AUNT S. Dead! Now why should she be dead?

ROSALIND. Oh, why should she be alive—she must be so miserable away from us all.

UNCLE J. I 'll wire at once, dear child, and set all this at rest. Go in, dear, now, and don't let fancies grow on you. [*Exeunt* ROSALIND *and* AUNT.

[UNCLE JOHN *sits down on seat and writes telegram.*]

UNCLE J. It is a long, dreary time since I had news of her, poor soul. I daren't seek her out after what she said, but at all events Blake will know where she was when he sent her money to her.

Enter SOPHY.

SOPHY. Are you here, Uncle John? I 've been in your room looking for you and watching Dorrington unpack your things. Hush! I want to tell you something private. Hush!

[*Loudly*] What an awfully big sponge you've brought, Uncle John, and what a lot of boots!

UNCLE J. Is that what you came to tell me, Sophy?

SOPHY. Oh, no. It's something quite private! They say one ought never to listen or watch people, but I never can see the harm. You learn a lot of useful things by it. Last night I was watching and I saw the lady come out of Amy's room.

UNCLE J. You? I shouldn't have thought you were the sort of person, Sophy——

SOPHY. To see ghosts, you were going to say. No. I'm glad to say I'm not. I've too much sense. But I knew all the time it must be a real lady. I don't know how I know, but I always did.

UNCLE J. A real lady. I don't know what you mean, Sophy.

SOPHY. Oh yes, you do. It's quite simple. It is no ghost, it is a real lady, as real as any one. I stood in the passage and saw her come out. She went quite close to me, and I felt her things, and they are as real as mine. Besides, there are no ghosts. If she

had been a ghost she would have known I was there, and she never did, never found me out, though I felt her things. O Uncle John, why do you have such big hair-brushes —I meant to ask you—such big, big brushes with no handles? Why do you have them so big when you have so little hair? [*Sinks her voice again.*] Her shoes were of that soft kind, with no heels, and she made no noise.

UNCLE J. This is a very strange addition to the story. I am obliged to you for telling me. It was no imagination then, but somebody, who for some strange motive—I am very glad you had so much sense as not to be deceived nor frightened. [*He pats her on the shoulder.*]

SOPHY. [*In a mysterious tone.*] Uncle John!

UNCLE J. What is it, Sophy? You have something more to say.

SOPHY. [*Hysterically.*] Uncle John, I think it is mamma!

UNCLE J. Sophy!

SOPHY. I am sure it is mamma!

UNCLE J. You must have some reason for saying this. What is it? Don't tell me

half, but everything. What makes you think——

SOPHY. Oh! I don't *think* at all. Why should I *think*? I saw her. I would not tell the others, or say anything, because it would harm us all, we should lose all our money, shouldn't we, Uncle John?—but I know it 's mamma.

UNCLE J. [*Seizing her by the shoulder angrily.*] You little—— Could you think of that when you saw your mother?—if it could be your mother, which is impossible. And you can't be such a little—such a demon as you make yourself out.

SOPHY. [*Bursts out crying.*] You never said that to any one else! It was Rex told me. He said we should lose all our money if mamma came back. We can't live without money, can we? Rex told me. He said that was why mamma went away.

UNCLE J. Rex too! [*Satirically—after a pause.*] What do you mean to do?

SOPHY. [*Startled.*] Do? I am not going to do anything, I thought I would tell *you*.

UNCLE J. And put the responsibility on my shoulders? But you can't forget what you

have seen. If your mother, as you think, is in this hotel, what shall you do? [*Looks at her anxiously.*]

SOPHY. O Uncle John, I 've not really, really seen her. She only just passed where I was standing. No one can punish me just for having seen her pass, and I never spoke to her.

UNCLE J. I think you are a great philosopher, my dear.

SOPHY. You are making fun of me. [*Crying.*] You wouldn't speak like that if it had been Rosalind. You always laugh at me.

UNCLE J. I have no wish to laugh, Sophy, far from it, I assure you. If your aunt wakes from her nap and finds you gone how shall you explain it?

SOPHY. Oh! I shall tell her that I was — I know what I shall tell her. I 'm not such a silly as that.

UNCLE J. You are not silly at all, my dear. I wish you were not half so clever. Go in now. I can't talk to you any more just now. [*Exit* SOPHY.

UNCLE J. Of course it 's obvious. Fate has thrown them all into the same hotel, and,

as usual, Fate does its work a deal better than anything else, and solves the most difficult questions. I must see her and learn what brought her here.

[*He goes to enter hotel and meets Madam coming out. They are both much moved.*]

MADAM. It is strange, John, yet very natural, that you should be the one to meet me in my great sorrow and perplexity when I so much need a friend.

UNCLE J. O Grace, not strange, when my thoughts have hardly left you these two weary, dreadful years! Why did you go as you did? Where did you go? Who did you go with?

MADAM. I went because to stay was to ruin my children. I went to the only country where an English criminal can escape English justice. I went with my eldest boy, who was a criminal fleeing from that justice.

UNCLE J. Your eldest son! O Grace! what does it mean? Will you explain at last?

MADAM. Why not? It can do no harm now.

He died this morning in my arms—poor, weak, erring boy, who never had a chance, because he never had love. I believe the police have come here after him; but he is safe now, yes, safe and so quiet; gone to the better place where the judgment is not like ours. No, no. It is mercy, not judgment, he will find there, for all will be known, and not only the worst. I can't stand more now. Will you give me your arm, dear John, and I will tell you more when I can. [*He gives her his arm and they go in.*]

Enter REX *and* SOPHY *from garden, talking.*

SOPHY. I told Uncle John, and he asked me what I was going to do. How could I do anything, Rex? I watched because I don't believe in ghosts, and I knew it couldn't be a ghost. Besides, I did not actually see her so as to speak to her. I only touched her as she passed to make quite sure.

REX. And you are certain it was——

SOPHY. Mamma? Yes, of course I am sure. I don't take fits like the rest. I always know what I see. Don't you think Uncle

John ought to have done something at once about it?

REX. I 'll tell you what, Sophy! Soon it 'll be a thing for *me*! I can't let things go on like this with all Aunt Sophy's and Uncle John's muddlings. Amy will just be driven out of her senses; and Rosalind is just a romantic donkey. *I* am the head of the family, and I shall have to interfere.

SOPHY. But you are only seventeen!

REX. I am the head of the house. John Trevanion may give himself as many airs as he likes, but he is only a younger son after all, and of no account therefore. It is I that have got to decide what 's right for my family. If—if—Mrs. Trevanion is to come like this, frightening people out of their wits——

SOPHY. O Reginald! how can you call mamma 'Mrs. Trevanion'?

REX. What 's her name? I am going to insist that she should live somewhere, so that a fellow may say where she lives. It 's awful when people ask you where 's your mother not to be able to say. A fellow's mother ought to have an address. She 's

got enough to live on, I suppose. I shall propose to let her live where she chooses, but to make her stay in one place, so that one knows the address and she can be found when she 's wanted. Amy could be sent to her for a bit, and then the fuss would be over.

SOPHY. But, Rex, you said we should lose all our money.

REX. Oh, bother! Who 's to say anything? Should I make a trial and go into a beastly law court and expose the family just to take her money from Amy? You 're very sharp, Sophy, but you must be a cad to think of that. It isn't so much you have—you girls—that I should mind. I suppose even, if I insisted, they might take a villa for her here or somewhere; and then one could say she lived abroad for her health. I know lots of fellows whose father or mother or some one lives abroad for their health. It would be more respectable; a sort of thing one could speak about.

SOPHY. I wish you had told me that one could get out of it like that, for I should have liked to speak to mamma.

REX. I 'm not sure that we *can* get out of it like that. The law is very funny. But at all events I know that I won't let it be muddled any more, and I am going to interfere. Come on for a row, Sophy. There 's Uncle John and Rosalind, and I don't mean to listen to any more lectures from *them.* [*Exeunt* REX *and* SOPHY.

UNCLE JOHN *comes in hurriedly and is followed by* ROSALIND.

ROSALIND. Stop, Uncle John, stop and speak to me. Have you heard anything?

[*He turns round; she sees his face.*]

There is some news.

UNCLE J. Yes, Rosalind, something has occurred. Be composed, you are so full of sense.

ROSALIND. What has sense got to do with it? Do you think all that has happened can mean nothing? It is all a mystery now, but if I live it shall be cleared up. One thing I know, if she is not dead—and you say she is not dead—my mother is here.

UNCLE J. My dearest girl, I have told you she is not dead.

ROSALIND. Uncle John, in two days I shall

be of age. As soon as I am my own mistress, I am going, Amy and I, to her. Amy will be safe; I have enough for both of us. But this shall not go on any longer. She is all the mother I have ever known, and I have left her these two years under a stain which she ought not to bear and in misery she ought never to have known. A mother banished from and doubted by her own children! Not by me, no, never for a moment by me, for I know her, I know her. [*Sobs.*]

UNCLE J. Rosie, my darling, be patient for a very little longer. It will all be cleared up without your help, my dear. If there is anything to discover that is to her shame——

ROSALIND. [*Putting her hand on his mouth.*] There is nothing.

UNCLE J. [*Trembling voice.*] My dear, you don't know how mysterious human nature is! There are fine and noble creatures, such as she is, such as she undoubtedly is—don't think I doubt that—who yet have a spot, a stain, which a man like me may see and grieve for and yet forgive, but that you——

ROSALIND. You are wrong, you are very wrong, Uncle John. That a woman like me may wash away with her tears, but that should never, never be betrayed to the eyes of a man.

UNCLE J. My dear child, yours is the truest way, but, Rosalind, leave me, leave me now. The next hour or two may settle much. Go, go now, and, who knows, all may yet be well. [*Exit* ROSALIND.

ROLAND *rushes in much excited.*

ROLAND. Have you heard? Have you heard? It is her indeed! She, as she always was. She opened the door herself—white as death, with such a smile. She said, 'Come in.' I knew at the first glance how it must be. There was a nurse there and poor old Jane. She let that man in, and I went in with him, not thinking how I was presuming. And there he lay on the bed—dead—dead, Trevanion; such a handsome fellow, younger than I am. She looked at me with a kind of smile. I could have sunk into the earth, knowing what a cad I had been. The Scotland Yard man slunk away. Oh, I know it's not his fault—was it any one's

fault—that she has been hunted about the world like this?

UNCLE JOHN. [*Grasping his hand.*] Roland, you knew what a woman she was.

ROLAND. Oh, not always as I ought—Rosalind knows—Heaven forgive me! And she gave me a smile as if I were a friend! when I had been the most wretched, miserable eavesdropper, and had not understood.

UNCLE J. [*Walking up and down in great agitation.*] Her son! her son! To save him from ruin and disgrace. Fools! dolts! brutes! blind asses that we were! We thought of everything but that—everything that was guilty and miserable and filthy we thought of—but never of this! God forgive us! We knew her life, and it all went for nothing. At the first suspicion she was left standing alone. [*Exeunt.*

Enter AUNT SOPHY, REX *and* SOPHY; *Waiter carrying rugs, etc.*; ROSALIND *from other side.*

AUNT S. We thought it would be pleasanter here in the garden this lovely day. *Garçon, mettez le tapis là, là.* I am always afraid of rheumatism, and when gout is in the family,

as it is in all good families, one can't be too careful. *Garçon, un cousin pour mon dos. Vous n'écoutez pas, vous n'êtes pas de tout attentive à moi. Le tapis pour mes pieds; le cousin pour mon dos.*

[*A good deal of fussing on* AUNT SOPHY'S *part, bewilderment on the waiter's.*]

There, there! *là, là!* *Mettez-le* there under our feet. How stupid foreigners are; they never understand what one says, however distinctly one speaks.

REX. Not when you speak to them in English, Aunt Sophy.

AUNT S. It is not for you to talk, Rex. You don't make much hand of it yourself. I had to get out of my comfortable chair and stand in a draught to ask for what you wanted, for all so grand as you are about my speaking.

REX. I should be ashamed to speak any language like a foreigner. Every one would think you had been at some beastly foreign school, and not brought up like a gentleman.

AUNT S. The impudence of those boys! But, Rosalind, what is the matter with you, dear, looking so distressed out here all alone?

SOPHY. She wasn't alone. I saw Roland go away as we came in. Why did he go away like that, Rosalind?

ROSALIND. I don't know. I seem to know nothing, and to feel everything.

AUNT S. I do hope you are not going to be ill now, Rosie!

ROSALIND. Oh, no, no! I'm only anxious. I am—only—and the bushes are so thick, one can't see—whoever may be coming.

AUNT S. It's true, the days are drawing in fast, but what can one expect in the end of August. John is right, we must soon be going home.

REX. Yes, indeed; I'm not going to stay in a foreign place after the first, where they know nothing about sport nor anything else that I see. I can just tell you all that.

AUNT S. Rosalind, are you looking for any one?

ROSALIND. No, no! [*Shivers.*] Isn't it getting chilly? I'm not looking for any one more than usual.

AUNT S. [*Surprised.*] More than usual, my dear?

REX. She is looking for that ridiculous ass,

Hamerton, to come and make love to her! All girls are the same.

SOPHY. Not all girls. I should hate it.

REX. Wait till you are tried, and you 'll wait some time.

AUNT S. Rex, if you can't be more civil, you shall be sent to a tutor or something to prepare for the army.

REX. Who would send me, I should like to know? I 'm not a portmanteau to be sent by Carter Paterson wherever you like to address it. After the shooting I may go to some comfortable crammer and go into the Guards; but once for all, please, both you and Uncle John understand I 'm jolly well able to look after myself. If I can't at seventeen I do not know when I can. It 's all right keeping the girls tight, they need it.

AUNT S. Rex, you are getting unbearable. Oh, dear, what a loss a mother is to a boy!

SOPHY. Rex, you are cheeky, and pray why are girls to be kept tight and boys let loose? *I* think girls are a deal sharper than boys at seventeen, I can tell you.

REX. Shut up, you idiot, who is going to listen to your opinion?

ROSALIND. Oh, he's coming! He's coming at last, Uncle John, and there's some one with him. Some one, oh! it can't be. [*Looking fixedly.*]

REX. Uncle John, sure enough. Who is the woman he has got with him?

SOPHY. [*With a scream.*] The lady, the lady.

Enter JOHN *supporting* MADAM, *who walks very slowly. She is almost concealed by a large lace veil.*

UNCLE J. [*Breathlessly.*] Rosalind, the mystery is all cleared up, I have brought you back your mother.

[MRS. TREVANION *puts back her veil.* ROSALIND *flies to her.* MADAM *puts an arm round her shoulder and looks longingly at* REX *and* SOPHY *who stand close together apart.*]

MADAM. [*To* ROSALIND.] My child, my dear child!

[*Holds out a hand to her children.*]

AUNT S. Grace, Grace! Now I couldn't believe my eyes. Oh, you dear soul. You dear! you dear! How glad I am to see you at last after all this long, long time.

[MADAM *has been holding her hand out*

and looking at REX *and* SOPHY, *but seeing they take no notice, she lets her hand fall and looks as if she would faint.*]

Get her a chair somebody! Get some water or wine, or something. She is going to faint.

[*They place* MRS. TREVANION *in chair.* JANE *rushes in with water. While giving it to her and tending her,* AMY *runs in from Hotel.*]

AMY. Good-night, good-night, Aunt Sophy. I 've got to go to bed and I 've come to say good-night.

[*She catches sight of* MADAM *and rushes to her—flings herself on her.*]

Mammie, mammie, my own mammie!

MADAM. [*Clasping her.*] Yes, my darling, your own mother! This is better than wine, take it away. I want no other cordial. Sophia, God bless you, you were always kind. [*Looking at* REX *and* SOPHY.] And my children, my children! [*Taking up* AMY.] Amy, my own little one, my baby. [*Reaching hand to* ROSALIND.] And Rosalind, my best and dearest, though she is

none of mine. I should die now, John, I ought to die! What can life have more for me? My own safe, safe, where all folly is forgiven—and the others restored, if only for a moment. It is enough. I ought to die now.

UNCLE J. No, Grace, no! You ought to live, to give them back what they have lost.

AUNT S. Die! Goodness me! What are you talking of! What would you die for, when everything has come right and we are all going to be so happy together?

MADAM. Have you told them, John, do they know the other story?

AUNT S. We don't want any story, Grace. Why we know you—what can any one want more? O Rosalind, look at her. Just the same. Amy, you happy, happy little girl to have your mother back. O John, I 'm so glad! I feel as if my heart would break. [*Bursts out crying.*]

MADAM. But yet the story must be told, and it is better it should be told at once. They all know how I went away and they must have heard—many things said—for you see, my boy does not come to his mother.

[*Looks at* Rex *and holds out her hand. He does not move.*]

No! they must hear it all then, every word, Rosalind, John. You were very unhappy about me before—before we were parted. You did not understand, but you believed in me!

Rosalind. Always, always!

Uncle J. [*Putting his hand on her shoulder.*] And I too, as in heaven! though I did not know what to think.

Madam. I knew it was so! and you were right though you were wrong. It was true that I went out to meet a man in the wood again and again—a man! He was scarcely more than a boy! Only three-and-twenty now. Rosalind, he was my son!

[Roland *starts and puts his arm round her.* Rex *shakes off* Sophy's *arm and comes a step nearer.*]

My son, born when I was not so old as you, Rosie! abandoned, because—Sophia, must not this dear child go to bed? Jane, take her in. Old Jane! darling, that you were so fond of, will sit by you till you are

asleep. [AMY *clings to her.*] My darling! I will come and kiss you in your bed—your own mother.

AMY. I don't want to leave you, mammie.

MADAM. But my baby is cold with the evening air. Good-night, my little one. Good-night. [*Exit* AMY *and* JANE, AMY *looking back.*

REX. [*Impatiently.*] I believe women would worry about children if the earth was going to pieces. What can it matter whether Amy catches cold or not?

MADAM. It is not so easy to tell you after all. When I first met your father I was a deserted wife with a little child. Left in a strange country without a friend—a widow with a child who could never know a father. I had been deceived, and I thought I was the most unhappy of women [*a pause*], I know better now.

UNCLE J. Grace, Grace, surely that is enough.

MADAM. No. They must know all. Your father came to the island, he saw me and he heard my story, and he was sorry for me—more than sorry. [*Smiles sadly.*] He

was young and so was I. He proposed to me, after a while, that if I would give up my boy—and we had no living, nothing to keep us from starvation—and marry him, he would take care of my child; it should want for nothing, but that I must never see it more. For a long time I could not make up my mind. But absolute poverty is very sharp. The child was pining, so was I, and I was young. [*Droops her head.*] I suppose, I still wished to be happy, I was hardly twenty. And your father loved me, and I him—and I him. [*A pause.*] I was never to see my child again, but my heart betrayed me and I deceived my husband. It was wrong on both sides—to my husband and to him. I don't excuse myself. Then, poor boy, he fell into trouble. How could it be otherwise? His father's blood was in him and mine too—a woman false to my vow. When he was in great need and trouble he came to his mother—was it not natural? And then Russell you know had never loved me, and she found it out. She carried the story to my husband. You think, and she thinks [*she rises and stands*],

that my husband suspected me of—of—I cannot say what. But Reginald had no such thought. He knew me better. He knew I went to meet my son. [*A pause—looking up at* JOHN.] Is there any more to say? Oh! yes. When I was driven out from you I went to Edmund, my forsaken son. He was in great danger and trouble, and I have been with him all these two dreadful years! [*Pauses again.*] My son Edmund died to-day.

ROSALIND. [*Embracing her.*] O mother, mother!

[JOHN *stands behind her.* ROLAND *beside her. She stretches out her arms to* REX.] Rex, have you nothing, nothing to say to your mother? O Rex, I have no son but you now.

REX. I don't know what there is to say, I suppose I am expected to stick to my father's will. It's all a beastly mess and comes of my not being sent for sooner.

SOPHY. But, mamma, they say we shall lose all our money if we go to you. [MADAM *looks at her.*] You gave up your baby for being poor, what should Rex and me do?

We are younger, though you said you were so young. We want to be well off too. What can we do? I am just doing what you did yourself. I want to be happy and comfortable too, like you did.

MADAM. [*Lying back.*] I—I have my answer. It is quite enough. I have no—complaint to make. My children have judged me.

[REX *rushing forward.*]

REX. Sophy, you horrid little cad.

[*He throws himself down at* MADAM'S *knees.*]

Mother, don't look like that. I didn't mean it. I do love you and want to do all I can for you, indeed I do.

MADAM. My own boy, you need not be afraid. I am so ill advised as to go on living, nothing will be changed. Let me stay with them to-night, John, and then I 'll take my pilgrim's staff again and go on.

ROLAND. You shall take no pilgrim's staff. You shall come to me, Madam—mother. I am not dependent on any man's will. I am my own master and your servant as long as I live. Come to my house [*takes* ROSALIND'S *hand*]—to our home.

MADAM. [*Gives him her hand and puts his into* ROSALIND'S.] Your home and Rosalind's. [*Stretches a hand to* JOHN.] And you, John, tender and true.

CURTAIN

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